

A Sailor's Love

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Published by Alan Place, 2014.

THANKS

I would like to thank two special ladies for giving their help and support as I wrote this book.

I wish to thank my good friend and editor, Julia Petrakis, for her undying belief in me.

And my very special friend, Ruth Slattery, who is my guiding spirit as she has read most of my work.

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A SAILOR'S LOVE

First edition. February 19, 2014.

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This story is dedicated to the people who live, and sometimes die, fishing around the coastal regions of the world.

A SAILOR'S LOVE

Jannine cried into her pillow, "Not again, not now, why me?"

The loss of her lover, Helmut, came back to haunt her every night. He had been lost in the caves below the old house. Her previous lover, a fisherman named Ian, had been lost at sea. She believed lightning never struck twice in the same place but she lost two lovers to the sea.

The story began several years ago, when a stranger entered *The Lobster Pot*, a small inn at Bartlebay. He wasn't tall and handsome but he carried with him a sense of being. The man had a way about him which made you wish to learn more about his life.

The bar of *The Lobster Pot* began to fill up. The smoky atmosphere to which the many pipes of the sailors contributed made a heady feeling as Helmut entered the inn. Most of the men in the inn at this hour were fishermen. The office folk shunned *The Lobster Pot*. The office folks considered being seen near *The Pot* beneath them. Big money passed hands in the village's main pubs and bars. While in the dockside inn the talk remained mundane and down to earth.

The rain-lashed figure of Helmut Charbrier entered the inn and all eyes turned to the stranger. He was definitely new to the area and this made the regulars uneasy. Helmut took no notice. He walked to the bar, with a smile which shone through to the window of his soul. After viewing the drinks he said, "Can I have a pint of bitter please?"

Strangers are viewed as intruders in Bartlebay. Here was a tightly knit fishing community. Everybody who went to *The Pot* knew everybody else and viewed strangers with contempt.

Young Jannine was only just old enough to be a barmaid. She found herself taken in by the stranger's lack of concern for opinions of others. His strange tonal range intrigued her as she said. "We get a lot of Poles and Russians around here, and even a few Scandinavians. I've never heard your accent before and I am good at detecting accents."

With a rueful smile he said, "Young lady if we keep talking, perhaps you can try to guess where I am from."

Jim Morrissey, who is skipper of the trawler *Pots of Gold*, said, "I got back from a voyage to the Northern shawls last week. I'm foxed. Your accent isn't German, Norwegian, Swedish or Danish either."

The stranger turned to where Jim was sitting and said, "You are right. I come from closer to here. Yet I travelled for a long time to reach the shores."

Toby Marlin who skippered tourists around the harbour on his boat *Carol Anne*, said, "That's a fair riddle. You come from closer to here but you travelled a long time."

The stranger grinned. He realised he had unwittingly been drawn into their circle with this riddle. The other men at Jim's table huddled round in quiet debate, trying to work out an answer.

"Excuse me, Miss," the stranger began.

"You can call me, Jannine."

"Thank you. Jannine, do you know where I can get a room, please?"

Jannine thought for a while then replied, "I'm sorry. This is out of season and everywhere is closed now. Being a seaside resort most of the staff are sent home and the owners take their holidays now."

The stranger ran his hands down his wet clothes and said, "I don't think I'll be here long. But, I do need to get some dry clothes and some hot food in me, before I catch a chill."

Toby looked up from the table and said, "We're sorry. The only place around here is the old captain's hut on Longland pier. The area is pretty bleak and exposed to the wind and rains. I'm not sure if the hut is dry as it's been closed a long time."

The stranger glanced at Toby and said, "That will do nicely. Thank you for the kindness."

Jannine glanced at the door rattling in the storm and said, "Wait until you see the place, before you thank us."

Jim stood up and commented "As we are getting on, why not come and sit by the fire with us, friend. We are pondering what you said and can't get to the bottom of it."

Helmut got off his stool by the bar and glanced at Jannine, "Did you work the problem out, Jannine?" he asked.

Jannine stopped to think about it and said, "I have an idea but I'm not sure."

With a dry laugh, the stranger said, "When you finish work tonight, can you show me where this hut is please? I will give you until then to try to solve the puzzle I set. If you haven't found out, I will tell you the answer."

Jannine glanced at the clock on the wall and replied, "You have a deal. I finish at 10:30pm and the hut is about a twenty minute walk from here. Unless we are walking into a headwind," she said, as she giggled.

Helmut left the bar and walked over to the table; taking the seat offered by Toby. He sat among his new group of friends. The night was cold and the winds howling down the chimney made the fires glow high and hot as the sparks rose.

Toby took it up on himself to be group chairman, as he introduced the group to the newcomer. "I'm Toby Marlin, I run the tourists around the bay in the season." He looked to Jim and said "The man you talked to is Jim Morrissey; he skips the *Pots of Gold* down in the harbour."

Helmut introduced himself, "I am Helmut Charbrier and I used to be a trawler man on a boat. She went down a few days ago at sea. I am not sure what happened. The ship went down so quickly. One minute we were hauling in the nets and the next minute, we were awash."

"That was your boat. We picked up signals at the lifeboat station but couldn't get a launch as the waves were too high. How many hands were on her when she went down?" Jim asked.

Helmut gazed into an empty glass and with tears in his eyes, he said, "The *Katerina* had six hands. All close friends of mine. I fear I am the only survivor."

Jim held the shaking Helmut close and said, "I'm sorry for your loss. We are all locals and know the pain of losses like these. The pain never goes; we learn to live with our losses. Their memories won't die as long as you remember the good days. I think you'd better be getting off to the hut, Helmut, before you get a cold. Jan, can you show him the way?"

Hearing her name, Jannine turned, "I'll be with you in a tick, Jim!"

Jim replied, "No, we're fine thanks. Can you take Helmut over to the hut?"

"I don't finish for another twenty minutes!" she said looking at the old clock, sitting on its perch at the end of bar.

"Don't worry, Jannine. You won't lose out," Angie Jerrold the owner said. "It's almost closing time. I am sure one of these fine gentlemen would only be too happy to help a damsel in distress, like me,"

Toby glanced at Angie and commented, "Angie, you know we would help you any time. We would be the ones in distress if we didn't. Imagine, having to go into town and mix with all those office folk. Not to mention the watered down beer they serve at *The Crow's Nest*, the only reason they get away with it is because to get on. You have to be in the scene and that means being seen up there."

"Jannine, you had better get our guest to the hut before he catches a cold," Angie said with a smile that lit the room. Secretly wishing she could take him in her arms. And let her golden hair touch his skin, as he warmed himself by the fire.

Jannine glanced at Angie, and seeing Angie wink; she opened the flap and went for her coat. "I won't be long, Helmut. I need to get some clothes out of the spare room for you. Then you can change into dry ones for the walk over at least. Tomorrow you can sort yourself out."

Helmut got up from his seat and walked over to the fire, before saying, "Thank you for the kindness you have shown to a stranger."

The warmth of the fire flowed into Helmut's tired and cold body as he stood by the hearth. His thoughts drifting between what had happened and what was to come. For now he was pleased to receive the warmth and friendship offered him at *The Pot*.

The winds howled outside as they drove the waves inward onto the pebbled beach. To the men at *The Pot* the sound of the winds was a constant reminder of the harsh weather ahead. The winds whistled down the chimney as the fire blazed in the hearth and windows rattled in their old wooden frames. Even the warm cable knit sweaters struggled to keep the effects of the harsh north wind out. Jim said to Helmut, "I still can't place your accent. When shall we know the answer, Helmut?"

Helmut grinned and said, "I'll tell you my story tomorrow. For tonight I need a warm meal and a hot drink and a bed. I was fighting the waves and the cold for so long I am worn out."

A call from the back door roused Helmut's attention as Jannine called, "Helmut, your clothes are ready. I think the time has come to get you out of the wet clothes and dried off, before you catch your death of cold. The winds here can chill you to the bone in minutes, any of the men will testify to that, and it

can take hours to get warm again. We'll use the cycle path. At least the path is shielded from the rain for part of the journey to Longland pier."

Helmut went to the window and viewed the sea for the last time today. The seas pounded the beach, as he muttered, "La Mer. She is a wonderful lady, sometimes charming and sometimes deadly. Sailors love her moods as much as any true lady."

Toby commented, "You are right, my friend. She is a true enchantress both alluring and deadly. That is why she is respected by the folks on the ships and why we learn her moods."

Helmut glanced around the room. His eyes caught a puzzled look on Jannine's face and he winked and grinned to her, "Mon Cher, you are puzzled, what is your dilemma?"

Jannine watched as the men in the bar waited for her reply, "Helmut, you are the dilemma. I'm still puzzled as to your nationality."

"Once we get to the hut and I begin to get warm again. I will tell you a few things to put your mind at ease. For now we shall have to bid my new friends a good night. The winds and rain are seeping through my damp clothes and the need to get warm is great. I bid you a good night, my friends." Helmut said as he waved his farewell. He walked out into the windy night, following the smaller figure of Jannine down the path.

After ten minutes, Jannine and Helmut passed out of sight of *The Pot*. He stopped to glance out to sea. For minutes Helmut stood on the path staring out at the wide expanses of sea. Then without saying a word he crossed himself and re-joined Jannine on their journey.

Jannine asked him, "Were you saying a prayer for your friends?"

Helmut replied, "Yes, but not only for my friends; for all souls that have been lost at sea."

Mismatched as they appeared to be, Helmut and Jannine were forming a solid friendship. The lone sailor lost on foreign shores and his young charge walked head bowed into the winds. Helmut struggled to make headway against the wind and could hardly hear Jannine's tiny voice, when she called to him. "The hut is about a hundred yards ahead of us."

They arrived at the old seaman's hut. The paint washed off by winds and sands of time. The planking in need of repair and the window frames warped

and splintered. Glancing at the hut, he said, "This will do me well, thank you for showing it to me."

She walked around the old hut for a few minutes and said. "I realise the hut isn't much. The guest houses are closed until Easter."

The hut had seen better summers. The paint was showing its age but to a frozen Helmut, this would be home for now. "We'll need a rummage around to try and find things," she said. "Not many people come down here since Ian passed away."

He looked at the hut and enquired, "Was this his hut?"

Jannine glanced up the hill and replied, "People in the area still consider the hut to be his. They think the hut is haunted by his ghost."

Helmut continued with the line of thought and asked, "What do you think?"

Her eyes misted over at the thought of her former lover, who was lost at sea as she replied, "My mind is open. I haven't seen him but I know people who claim they did."

The cold winds whistled through the broken planks and Jannine saw him shiver and said. "Come on. Let's get you out of those wet clothes and into dry ones. We don't want our guest to think we don't wish him to be comfortable on such a windy night."

Helmut started to undress but stopped after taking his jumper off. His tall, muscular frame showed through his soaking shirt. Jannine's eyes glistened and her irises opened to the sight of such a sexy man. She had never before been this aroused.

She had seen the men on the docks and fantasised about them but they were like family. Here was a new man in the area, lost and lonely. Jannine was beginning to think her fantasy of making love to a sailor may yet come true. Helmut hesitated in undressing and she said, "Don't tell me you're shy, Helmut."

The blonde haired sailor shook his thick head of hair and dried the matted mass. He said with a wink and twinkle in his eye, "I am not shy. I think it a little inappropriate for you to view me naked at the moment."

The young girl's imagination ran wild as she thought of all those muscles and the hard firm hands running over her body. Involuntarily she bit her lip in anticipation as she sensed a slight dampness in her crotch. By saying 'For the

moment, Helmut had hinted he may have other ideas later. Thoughts of being held in his arms raced in her mind. "I am not leaving until I am sure you had at least a hot drink, Helmut," Jannine said sternly. "The bedroom is over in the far corner of the hut. If you wish for privacy you can close the door. I'll put the kettle on for us, while you get changed."

Helmut picked up the damp towel and took it to the bedroom. While he walked he rubbed his matted chest hair. In doing this Jannine caught a sight of the scars of old injuries on his bared chest. Some not so old were visible on his arms. Among the cuts was a raw wound which could only have been done a day or two ago. Though in pain when he moved, Helmut never let Jannine know of his agony. Not only the loss of close friends but the personal pains of rope burns dowsed in icy water. *"I am a man and men are not allowed to show pain,"* he thought.

Jannine's long black hair shone like a raven's wing across her shoulders as the droplets of water travelled down her checks. She moved from her seat in the corner to the window overlooking the sea. She gazed out as waves crashed on to the Point. The spray lashed the pane of glass. Jannine was looking out of the window making her cry out, "Oh Lord!"

Helmut reached the bedroom door when she cried out. Hearing her cries he dashed over to the window to find her shaking and crying, "What's wrong?" He asked in a gentle voice that oozed love and kindness.

Not knowing how to phrase what she thought she had witnessed. Jannine said, "Please don't think I am a silly little girl but I think I may have seen a ghost."

He pulled her into his half naked body and said, "Jannine, you may be young but you are certainly not silly. As for the ghost; the sea mists can create all types of illusions. Who or what did you think is out on the Point?"

The paleness of her face told its own story as she said, "I thought I caught a sight of Ian. He walked past the window and I only got a glimpse, so, I can't be sure."

Jannine sensed his strong arms pulling her into his muscular frame and realised she wanted him then and there but the friendship had to be done at his pace; this way the love would grow and be strong and he would realise he had been loved and not just lusted after.

Helmut gazed through the misty rain and dark shadows and asked, "What happened to Ian?"

Jannine didn't take her eyes off the glass but she sensed the sadness in her voice when she replied, "Nobody knows. He went out night fishing and the next day we found no signs of him or the boat."

"What was the weather like the night he set out?"

"That is the reason for the mystery. The night was still and it had been a beautifully calm day, not a sign of high wind or a storm. Ian had been a good swimmer since his late teens but his body never surfaced on the shores. The boat was washed ashore undamaged; the mystery scared the village for months."

He pulled Jannine into his body, as he cuddled her he asked, "Were you close?"

Jannine turned to look at Helmut. His hair was damp and the water dripped off his hairy chest; as it did she noticed the droplets splashing on the wooden floorboards. "We planned to get engaged the summer he vanished. Ian had been saving for our house and I helped with any spare money I earned from *The Pot*. I know he wouldn't have walked out on me without a reason; we used to talk about our situation and try to find a way through."

For the first time in months Jannine realised how lonely she had become. She had devoted her time to helping Angie run *The Pot* since Ian's disappearance. Now this tall, handsome stranger opened her heart to a yearning. She had denied herself too long. Without thinking, she gave into her longing to be loved again. She pulled Helmut into her young body, her firm breasts crushing on his strong body. As the excitement of the moment took her all the way her nipples grew taut and she could feel his hands tweaking them to arousal. Helmut didn't resist. The thought of an attractive young lady in his arms made him want her too much too worry about how it would appear later. They stood by the window locked in their embrace for several minutes. Helmut's hands gently caressing Jannine breasts through the material of her soaked shirt. Despite the gnarled hands and the strong fingers needed to be a seaman, he had the touch of a butterfly landing on a leaf. Jannine found herself getting more aroused by the minute. Helmut realised he may be beginning to care for his young companion beyond mere friendship. The pair became locked together as the joint realisation of their needs grew. Jannine moved closer to him as his hands explored her

bottom through her tight jeans. The tightness hugged her figure as she let him stroke her panties.

"Mmmmmm," Janine murmured as she enjoyed the moment of passion which they shared.

Helmut said half-apologetically, "I'm glad you are enjoying my caresses. I didn't want to go too quickly or too soon and make you uncomfortable with my reactions."

Jannine replied, "I had the same idea. I wanted to kiss you so much but realised we need to move at your pace."

Helmut commented, "I hoped you wouldn't think me too forward."

"Not at all," Jannine replied, "we can become close friends and take things slow for a while. Now, handsome, give this girl a cuddle please. This girl needs one before she braves the storm on her way back to *The Pot*."

The cold winds howled through the gaps in the shrunken boards. Where the rain had been pushed through the floor had a dangerous coating of water. Helmut and Jannine were locked in an embrace; all they cared about was being cuddled. The couple cuddled and moved in a slow dance of romantic love as they sought the bed for a rest. They waltzed through the door and fell on the bed, as Jannine said, "Remember, we do this at your pace."

Helmut raised his tired body and replied, "I realise that. For now all I wish for is a cuddle and a goodnight kiss before you leave me."

Jannine rolled onto her side and pulling her hair out of the way kissed Helmut gently. Her fingers running over his scars and taut muscles, she added. "You will have to let me rub some ointment on those cuts tomorrow."

Helmut glanced at the young lady who lay beside him and his eyes misted over as a tear fell on his cheek. He thought Jannine hadn't noticed as he quickly wiped the droplet away, "Who is she?" Jannine asked.

"Who is who?" Helmut replied.

She stroked his matted hair and said, "I saw you cry a tear for a lost loved one, Helmut. Please let me into your heart and before you say it was water dripping. Your hair is dry so you can't use that as an excuse."

He paused as he remembered his home. After the pause he continued, "I had a passing thought. You remind me of my young sister. She left us a few years ago and we never heard of her again. The family kept hoping for a letter but as times passes our hopes die."

Jannine cuddled into his taut muscular frame and gave him a soft kiss as she whispered, "I'm sorry. I had no idea and I feel bad for asking."

He rolled on to his back and pulled her down with him, "Please don't be upset. What I did wasn't your fault. Sometimes I get memories of her on the beach with the wind blowing her hair back and my sister splashing in the water's edge. When she left she broke my parent's hearts, they hoped she would be a successful business lady. She had a great mind and the determination and desires to go places. Then one day she walked out of our lives and never said a word."

Jannine gazed into his sad eyes and was able to view the forlorn stare of a soul in torment creep across his brow. Helmut tormented himself with old images torn from a history he had no contact with, "Perhaps, when you are ready. We can try to make some of our own memories," Jannine asked, hoping he may agree.

"That would be lovely. I will look forward to the days we spend together. For now I will put the kettle back on. Then we can have another cup of tea as you will need one to keep you warm when you go back."

Helmut got up from the bed. His mind still lost in the loving embraces of Jannine's tender touches. His body still ached as he walked to the stove by his window. He had got lost in his thoughts and didn't remember Jannine come out to find out what he was looking at. "A penny for your thoughts," she asked.

He turned with a start, "Excuse me."

Jannine was a bit taken aback by his sudden turn, "I apologise for startling you. It's an English term and means can you tell me what's on your mind?"

He turned and pulled her into his tired and sweaty body as he said, "I was thinking of a world I left behind. And why is a pretty girl like you, wanting to be with an old sea-dog like me?"

Jannine winked at him. In a low and sexy voice she said, "This girl wants to be with you because she wants a real man to hold her close. A man who is able to arouse a lady's passions and make her heart beat faster. Right now my heart is pounding and my body aches for your touch, Helmut."

He pulled her in close to him and ran his hands over the tight, wet jeans she was wearing. Her bottom moved to meet his fingers as they eased across the seam under her panties and over her crotch. His hands aroused her lips she lost control for a minute and pulled his head in and gave a full mouth to mouth kiss.

Her tongue exploring his mouth as his fingers aroused her inner feelings. "You are good with your hands," she whispered as she fought to get her breath back.

He gave a short and harsh laugh before he replied, "Being at sea, you learn how to use your hands. I hope I wasn't too forward."

"Helmut, you are such a gentleman you could never be too forward. Any lady who thinks you are too forward is missing a real treat; believe me."

The sea spray lashed the hut with a vengeance as the evening light faded. The boarding was not successful at keeping the hard driven spray at bay. Puddles on the floor seeped towards the door. "I will have to find some boards in the morning. By the sound of the weather we will be in for a rough time." Helmut said as he held Jannine close and glanced out into the dark void. "It's so windy out there, are you sure you want to go back tonight?"

Jannine held her breath for a second and replied, "I would love to accept your offer. It isn't that people will talk about us. I'm not worried about them. I think we should get to know each other better first."

Helmut hugged her and said, "You are wise for one so young, Jannine."

Jannine held him closer and said, "Thanks for the compliment. I don't want to rush what we have. I want our friendship to last. The best way for that is a slow progress, which we think suits us. With no pressures to do anything we don't think is right for the moment. I thank you for the tea and company but I must go now. Angie will be getting worried about me and the storm is rising."

With a hug and a kiss they parted. The winds weren't abating as Jannine struggled back against the rainy night. Her hopes of forgetting about the agony of losing Ian were growing stronger.

Helmut watched her walk back for as long as he was able. Never sure if she would be safe on a night like this and wishing she had stayed with him. Before he closed the door, he took a last glance out to the Point and the sight he saw took his breath away. He thought he caught sight of a man in sweater standing out on the Point. "I must be seeing things because I'm overtired," he muttered as he closed the door.

The fact both of them had seen a ghost outside the hut intrigued Helmut. Perhaps Jannine's ghost had been caused by his closeness and her remembrances of Ian. But what about the ghost he had witnessed? He had never heard of Ian before tonight and what did seeing the ghost signify?

He was a seaman and superstitious by nature of the job as things at sea or not always what they appear. The spray can distort the light and lights in the night cannot always be explained away as passing ships. After finishing his coffee, he decided the only way to appease his curiosity was to take another look. He drank the last mouthful and grabbed the coat which Jannine had brought for him. He wrapped the coat around him and went out into the storm to try and get another glance at the spectre. He opened the hut door and was immediately hit by the chill in the wind. He shivered and pulled the coat closer into his body, he thought, *"I hope Jannine got back to The Pot."*

Helmut walked around the hut and gazed into the darkness towards the headland trying to find out if the ghost had returned. In the black of the night, vision was limited to no further than his arm's length. The only noises were the thunderous roar of the tide on the beach. "What did I expect to find?" he muttered as he went back in the hut.

He closed the door, even though closing the door served little purpose. Over the years the wood had shrank and the winds drove the rains through the gaps. Too tired to make a fresh pot of coffee, he went to his room and undressed for bed. Tired and aching he may be, Jannine had aroused long dead passions. As he lay on the bed sleep wasn't easy when such a pretty young girl roamed your mind. Her image kept bringing thoughts of making love with her and he realised that hard as he may fight the truth. She turned him on. His manhood twitched at the thought of seeing her young, tender body naked next to him.

He drifted in and out of a semi-dozing sleep for hours. He wanted to make love to Jannine but he remained unsure if she wanted him. She had said she wanted to feel his body close to hers and to tend his sores, cuts and bruises. Did she pine for Ian or did she want him?

The hard rains pelted the windows and made the panes rattle in the old putty joins. Even in this wretched state he was still grateful for use of the old hut. Cold and windy his shelter may be but any port in a storm.

He rose in the morning with a tired body still sore from the chill of the icy seas and his fingers remained stiff from the cold of the night. The cold penetrated him and he realised he needed the inner warmth of a hot meal as much as he needed dry clothing. The only food in the hut was some sandwiches from last night which Jannine had brought down. "Better than nothing," he muttered as he ate them. The coffee started to work its magic and slowly warmed him. But,

he knew he needed to work outside and repair his shelter. For this he would require some hot food for energy and to keep the winds out.

The gray dawn of a winter's day made a slow entrance as Helmut sat on his bed wondering where he should start the work. As he sat assessing what needed to be repaired he kept an eye out for Jannine. She had said she would tend his cuts and bruises today. The icy winds bit into his skin and made the possibility of work a daunting task but it had to be done.

He finished his coffee and took a stroll along the beach. The pier is a long stretch of land which sticks out in the sea and the beach on either side is a mass of pebbles. Among these Helmut found some pieces of driftwood and broken planking.. He made occasional stops to pick up what pieces he could carry and to glance out to sea. From the look of the skies and the high winds of last night, he had no doubt in a few days or a week at the most. Snow might be on his roof. He made his first journey quickly. He ached in places he didn't realise he had but the journey was made in good time. He was going down for the second trip when he saw Jannine leaving *The Pot*. He knew she would be with him soon and he had a choice to make. Either wait for her or try to get the next load up and meet her on his return?

While he thought about the decision; the decision got taken out of his hands by a knock on the door. "Can I come in?" Jannine called.

"Certainly, push the door but mind the puddles. I was about to try and seal the holes in the door first. You were quick, after last night I didn't expect you for another ten minutes."

Jannine giggled and replied, "Last night we had to contend with driving rain and the high winds. So we kept to the main path down here. Today, I took a shortcut which took a few minutes off the time and allowed me to walk faster." Jannine came in, her black hair flowing over her shoulders like a witches shawl. She walked over to the window and put her arms around her man. Slowly turning him to her she said, "How was your night?"

Helmut stretched his muscular arms around her, encompassing her young body in his strong, sensual frame and replied, "Restless. I had dreams about this young girl."

She gave him a wink and said, "What did she do?"

"She cared for this seaman and as she tends his sore body, they grew together and loved each other."

"Your dream sounded romantic, what happened?"

Helmut frowned and said, "Nothing. I kept waking and wondering did you want me?"

Jannine moved in close and hugged the rugged sailor, whispering in his ear, "I do want you. I have since we first met."

Helmut let her hair drift across his face as he held her close and kissed her and he whispered. "I wasn't sure if you are pining for Ian, it is understandable."

"Silly man," she giggled. "Of course I pine for him but my love for you is different. Now take that shirt and sweater off, before you make me do the job for you." After a moment she winked at him and licked her lips at the thought.

Helmut's shoulders were sore and the movement in them limited as he tried to pull the jumper over his head. The cold weather and aching limbs did not make it easier. He slowly stripped off his seaman's jumper and Jannine viewed for the first time. How muscular his body had become after years on the docks and trawlers. She had seen the men on the docks but they had become like family to her and meant nothing sexual. Here before her stood the man to take Ian's place in her heart and soul. She thought she sensed his yearning as he pulled off the wet shirt which had clung provocatively to his frame. The muscles showed through the wet material. His matted blonde hair which stuck to his face like a wet mat had the smell of old smoke.

Jannine glanced at him and smiling she said, "If you think it appropriate you can take your trousers off too. They can do with a dry before you get chills on your legs. I'll go and try to turn the radiators on, so we can dry your clothes." After trying all the radiators, Jannine returned to where he sat. She settled in beside the hulk of a man who she wanted to love and cuddled his hard muscled body. She could hear the wind banging the broken door and noticed the puddles of water forming on the floor. The hut appeared to be too run down and too much work to repair. "Do you think you can repair the hut? The weather isn't getting any better," she said looking out of the small and murky pane at the high seas below the hut. She glanced at Helmut and said, "I hope you don't mind. You are about Ian's size I brought some of his old clothes down for you to change into."

"I don't mind at all. My only clothes are what I am wearing and these are wet through. I need some dry clothes to change into. Thank you for bringing Ian's. I hope wearing them won't upset you."

"No. I'm okay with you wearing them. I would rather you wear them than somebody I don't know which may upset me. The clothes were in the attic anyway and would get mouldy if I hadn't brought them. Now there is some heat to dry the trousers. I can give you a rub down to help get some circulation flowing in your muscles, please turn to face me."

Helmut turned to face Jannine. His aching legs hung loose on the edge of the bed. Her fingers rubbed his thighs to get some warmth in them. Her fingers teased and kneaded his muscles. As she moved up his thighs she felt a twitch in his crotch, "Now, now. We can make love later." She said with a smile, "For now we need to get you warm and fed."

Helmut blushed and said, "I'm sorry. It's been a long time since I was this close to young lady, who wants me."

She leant towards him and placed her lips on his as she kissed him. Then she whispered, "You have nothing to be sorry for. We will be lovers soon and things need to take time to build up. I'll be ready for you, when you want to make love." As she said this she placed her hand on his cock. And gave a gentle stoke to try and judge the width and length of the penis.

Helmut winked at her as he sat beside his young friend, noticing how soft her hands were and how different to his gnarled hands. Working the nets made your hands calloused and hard. Seamen accepted this and thought nothing of the hardship. To combat this they rubbed the salt water on the calloused areas to harden the skin.

Jannine rubbed the lotion which she brought on the toughened muscles of his body. She witnessed his pain as he winced a little when she came across a new wound. Most of the cuts and bruises she had come across on the hands of the other men. But he had one set of very fine lash marks which she had not seen before. "What are these?" she asked as she viewed the lashes on Helmut's waist. "These fine cuts are raw and by the colour of them they appear recent ones."

He turned to face Jannine and tears ran down his strong features. He bowed his head and cried into his hands, "The cuts are recent. I got them last week. They are a remembrance of the last sailing of the *Katerina Scholl*. We were fishing the herring shoals and hauling in a load when the cable snapped. I got off lucky. I got slashed by the wires as they split but my close friend Johan didn't get off so lightly. The wires tangled around his body."

Jannine sensed his anguish and pulled him into her body to give him a little comfort. "What happened next?" she asked.

"The wires cut through Johan and he got dragged down with the weight of the nets. We had to standby as he got dragged down, all time he screamed in agony. I can hear him screaming in my dreams."

She leant forward and hugged her friend, through the pain and tears she observed the man behind the brave public face. Here is a tough seaman who found himself lost, lonely and afraid. Yet she sensed something mysterious about him and had difficulty putting her finger on what puzzled her. "*He's a fisherman but his voice and accent aren't from Germany or Scandinavia. Where has he come from?*" She thought. "I'll go gently with you. You are a tough seaman but your body needs to heal properly. That means some TLC and no major straining doing too much work."

"But..."

With a semi-serious glance and a twinkle in her eye, Jannine said, "There are no buts in this discussion. Do as I say or you will get punished," she said ending the conversation by giving him a kiss. "Now, let me put some ointment on those wounds. Sea water is a kill or cure quick fix. But they do need to be treated."

Helmut's pain was clear for her to see as he gingerly eased the shirt of his strong arms. Muscles flexed and his tattooed torso moved with the grace of a panther. He was used to moving quickly and without hesitation. He stood and lowered his soaking trousers; releasing what he was doing he paused and said. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to embarrass you. It is force of habit. I'm not used to having the company of a young lady."

The smile on her face told its own story. Jannine was not in the slightest bit embarrassed. She found herself looking forward to the feel of his strong body close to hers as they made love. "*All in good time,*" she thought.

He sat facing her as she started to rub the cream into the tired muscles of his arms. Her eyes viewed the many tattoos on his firm body. Some of the tattoos she recognised as regular seaman images; such as mermaids and sailing ships. It was his tattoo of a flag which caught her attention though. "I know that flag! You're Dutch. That explains why I had trouble trying to recognise your accent. The accent is similar to German but not as nasal."

He smiled at her and with a deepening sadness in his tone, he said. "Yes, I'm from the Netherland. To be precise from a little village called Vollandam. The ship had gone on a routine fishing voyage when we got caught in a storm. With no way to get back to the coast and home; we had to run with the winds. We fought to keep her afloat as best we could. There were nights we went without sleep as we bailed like fury. In the end fatigue overtook us and we had no option but to let her flow with the tides."

She sensed his tenseness as she held him closer and ran her fingers over his bristly face. His beard had become matted and covered in sea salts and the skin had become hardened by the winds. To Jannine this made his facial structure all the more exciting. He was a foreign sailor who was lost and far from home. In need of companionship and love and she hoped she was the person to fulfil his needs. "Don't worry. We're taking this at your pace. I love the way your body looked when you undressed. I hope we can become more than friends, or am I being too forward?"

Helmut moved closer to her and softly kissed her wet lips as he whispered, "No, you were not too forward. I would like us to be more than friends too. I need time to adjust to our new friendship."

Jannine leant in to him and put her hand on his lap. She sensed the twitch and said. "I think somebody else wants us to be closer too." She winked at him and then stroked his penis. The gentle rub made it harder and brought a smile to her lips. She licked her lips in anticipation of what may come in the weeks ahead. "Let me rub in the ointment and we can cuddle up. I can put some stew on later. I recall the stove used to work but it may take a while to get going after being shut down. Mr. Carter, our butcher, gave me some bones so I can make a thick broth to get your strength back."

She was right. At first Helmut had a hard job getting the burners to light. After half a box of matches (and plenty of cursing) the burners turned on and the stove came to life. When the stove came to life, shadows and a warm orangey glow spread around the small shack. Their wet trousers on the radiators began to steam as the heat flowed through the pipes. Helmut for the first time admired Jannine in daylight. Her figure was lithe as a dancer's and her long slender legs appeared strong. She caught him glancing at her and said with a smile, "Do you like my naked body?" She slowly turned around so he could take his time watching and seeing how turned on she was getting. Her nipples got hard-

er and a moist patch on her red panties making her intentions obvious to him. She wanted him and soon.

He smiled and replied, "What is there not to like? You are beautiful. Ian was lucky to have such a sexy young lady love him."

She walked over to Helmut. Her body moved like a bird in flight, graceful and enchanting. She tossed her head back. Her hair flowed like the water on a roof in a storm, and she said, "Now I am yours, if you want me?"

Helmut took her gently in his arms and said, "You know I do, Jannine." They stayed held together for minutes as they explored their new lover's body for the first time. He ran his fingers over the outside of her panties and felt the lips open to his touch. At the same time Jannine ran her hand down the shaft of his penis and sensed the power grow.

She smoothed his penis and sensed the powerful twitches it gave. As she thought, "*A young girl's dream is a hard cock between her lips and a sultry sailor from overseas.*" Jannine's mind took her on a fantasy trip to distant sand covered beaches. Her moist panties and open lips let her realise how aroused she had made him. As she rubbed his cock, Helmut let his hands roam over her young breasts. Not yet full. A man's touch on her tender young nipples had been able to tease the nipple out. He gently nibbled and licked the nipples as she eased his pants down to hold his cock for the first time. He saw the first signs of juices on the head as it glistened in the orange glow of the fire. Helmut pulled her soft skinned body close to his as they rolled on to the lumpy mattress. The couple were lost in loves embraces and didn't care about the lumps. They clung to this moment of passion for as long as they were able. Taking his time he entered her. Helmut made love slowly, allowing them to enjoy the moment of pleasure for as long as possible.

The harsh winds whipped the waves into foamy ripples outside. Waters drained through the pebbles on the beach and the door rattled in the jamb. Inside the lover's hot and sweaty bodies writhed in ecstasy enjoying their wild passions. Without a word Helmut rolled off Jannine and sat on the edge of the bed.

She opened her eyes from the ecstasy he was giving her and asked, "Is there something wrong?"

He turned to her and kissed her as he replied, "No, nothing at all. I was taking a breather before I carry on."

She rolled onto her back and said, "Can you kiss my back and cheeks, please?"

Helmut started to massage her back. He went down to kiss her, gently smoothing the skin as he licked her back and bottom cheeks. He noticed how she writhed in delight, "Have you had this done before?" he asked.

Jannine hugged the pillow as the ecstasy seeped through her body and replied, "Ian did it for me once or twice but never as good as this. Where did you learn to make love so well and be so attentive to a lady's needs and desires?"

Helmut gave a giggle and replied, "I didn't need a course. I learned how to take care of a lady by listening to what she said. I like to think by giving you pleasure, you will be more receptive to giving me pleasure back. That way we both benefit."

Jannine rolled over so her naked breasts and moist mound was easy for Helmut to view and said, "I appear to have found a genuine gentleman and a gentle man. What a great pleasure to know you. Now come and on finish me off. I'm almost ready to explode after having your strong cock in me."

He didn't need any more requests. He knelt between her thighs and started to lick the insides, before progressing to her moistened mound. Not long after he tasted her juices as she lost control and came on his tongue.

"Oh, Lord, that was lovely, thank you, love. Can you give me some more, please?" Jannine asked, looking embarrassedly at the floor.

"You can, love. But, for now, I need some food and to get back to work. I have a lot to get done and not long to complete the jobs which need to be done."

Jannine got up in a huff and said, "Does work always come before pleasure with you?"

Helmut began to sense the anger rising and tried to calm her. "You know I need to repair the hut before the bad weather gets a hold. WHAT is your problem? We'll have time to make love once this is done and we can relax knowing the hut is windproof."

She got off the bed and started to get dressed as he came over to give her a hug. He tried to stop a lovely morning turning into a nasty afternoon. "Don't bother trying!" She said as he approached. "I am off the boil now and it'll be a good while before I'll want you again."

He realised the clothes hadn't dried and said, "You can't go out in those. They aren't dry and you'll catch a cold."

Jannine turned her back on him and kept dressing herself. On her way out she turned and yelled at him, "As if you cared!"

The next thing he heard was the door slamming as he went back to his room and got dressed. "*You can't live with them and you can't live without them. She is a real firebrand and so full of life. Our relationship will be delightful,*" he thought as he finished dressing and put the kettle on.

He finished his coffee and pulled on his jumper and coat and walked to the door. When he opened the door he got a shock. He thought he caught a glance of a young man walking up the path to *The Pot*. The man wore a sea-man's jumper and cap and appeared to be lost. Helmut observed the man for a few minutes, trying to find what was wrong with him. The man appeared to be stumbling as if something pushed him and made him trip.

Helmut watched as the stranger stumbled up the path. The rain made the cobbles slippery and the man seemed worn out. Before he got half way up the path he stopped three or four times to take a breath. Each time he stopped he held his head in his hands before shaking his head. Was he trying to remember something which eluded him or trying to clear his head? Helmut had no idea what he had seen. The man walked up the first 300 yards of the path to *The Pot*. The he disappeared from sight but not from Helmut's sight. The path is visible until the last 100 yards of the journey to *The Pot*. The man vanished into thin air as if he ceased to exist.

Helmut stood for a while, trying to fathom the experience out logically. "People don't disappear," he muttered as he walked back to the hut to continue his repair work. The repairs had taken longer than he expected. The ordeal in the water took its toll on his body. The aches were making hammering hard but he had to press on with the work. Winter approached and the hut needed to be warm. *I wish Jannine was here to rub my arms and legs. The moment could be passed now,* he thought as he finished the side of the hut.

He closed the door behind as he entered his hut. He stood at the door and thought, *'With a bit of care this can look nice. For now isn't much but I don't need a lot to be comfortable. First thing to do is put a coffee on. After that I'll make a list of things for a meal.'*

He walked across to the small cabinet which served as a larder and found he was down to his last grounds of coffee. "Blast," he uttered, "I will have to go up to *The Pot* sooner than I wanted. That means seeing Jannine. In her mood any contact may cause a problem."

At the top of the path, Jannine stopped and viewed the path to the point. "Silly man, he missed out this time," she muttered as she turned and headed back to *The Pot*. I can always chat to Angie, she'll understand."

The walk from the top of the cliff to *The Pot* wasn't long. Jannine arrived back as Angie opened for the lunch crowd. "Hi, Angie, how goes things with you?" she called as she caught sight of her friend.

On hearing her name, Angie glanced up. "Hi, Jannine, I'm fine, thanks. How are you today? I caught sight of you leaving to visit Helmut."

Jannine flung her head to one side and replied, "Don't get me started, Angie. Men are a nuisance and Helmut is being a pain."

"Come in for a chat and cuppa before the men arrive. Perhaps the women can put them right," Angie said. With a wink and a twinkle in her eye which eased Jannine's anger a little.

The two ladies may be generations apart. However, they were fisher folk and they knew about their men and how to control them. They had to. When the men put to sea it was up to the women to run things.

Angie took Jannine inside and put the kettle on for a coffee. Angie took the cups into *The Snug*. This is an area where women gathered over the years to sort out issues of the heart. A female domain, no man has crossed the boundary. Old habits die hard. The warmth provided by the fires early glow cheered Jannine after the walk back from Helmut's hut.

"Now, tell Angie what's wrong and we'll try to remedy the problem of the heart."

"I could kick myself," Jannine started. "I acted like a silly young thing and threw myself at Helmut. And now he is backing off. I think I may lose him." Jannine stopped talking as the tears ran down her face and she sobbed on Angie's shoulder.

Angie ran her long fingers through her thick hair and thought about how to get Jannine back on the right track. "First things first, did he tell you it was over or to back off?"

"Not in as many words."

“What did he say?”

“He said he would rather repair the hut than spend time with me.”

Angie’s eyes twinkled and a wry smile crossed her lips as she said. “I know that may sound awful but view things his way. He is here. With no house and has to get the hut repaired before the winds and rain lash down. His words may sound hurtful but I agree with him.”

Jannine put her cup down and sat thinking for a while. “Yes, thanks for explaining things clearly to a silly young girl, Angie. What would I do without your counsel at times like this?”

Angie laughed and gave her friend a hug before she said. “You would probably get in a raging argument with somebody. Can you answer a question for me?”

Wiping the cream of her top lip, Jannine replied, “I will try, Angie.”

“In your heart, how much do you love him?”

“I love Helmut as much as I loved Ian. That is why it hurts being held at bay, when I want to give much more.”

“I thought you did. You had the same look in your eyes the night Ian arrived. How much do you think he cares for you?”

“I’m sure he cares a lot about me but he doesn’t want to open up yet. I can understand his reluctance.”

Angie got up from the table and walked over to the door, as she opened the door; she turned to Jannine and said. “What do you think about a bit of innocent fun with Helmut?”

Jannine glanced at the table in front of her and said. “I love him and don’t want to hurt him, Angie.”

“I wouldn’t hurt him and this little game will add spice to your love life.”

“What are you planning?”

“There is no set plan. We play this by ear, follow my lead and watch for winks and nods from me.”

“Mmmmmmmmmmm, this sounds intriguing. Okay, as long as he doesn’t get hurt.”

Angie walked back and leaned on the bar, brushing strand of hair from her face, she winced and said. “He’ll find it funny. Once he realises the joke, Jannine. We know you love him and he loves you.”

Jannine walked across to join Angie at the bar. Her hair swishing around her young face like a tidal swell of beauty and charm, then she replied. "Yes, we can sense we are in love."

Angie held her friend's hands and said. "He thinks he upset you with his actions. He'll be wary for a few days when he comes here, not wanting to upset you further. We can play on that unease, nothing serious. This is only a little joke which he'll forgive you for next week."

"You are sure no harm will come to him and you did say it will add fun to our friendship."

"Believe me; things will work out fine, trust Angie. I was where you are and I got a few scars but many lovely memories. I think Helmut is the type who'll appreciate you more, once he realises you have a funny side. My wink will be the sign to play up and ignore him. When I nod that's your cue to be the old Jannine."

Unaware of what Angie planned for him. Helmut was busy writing his shopping list for the trip into town. It may be winter but the stores in town had to sell to the locals and he had a growing shopping list. "Coffee, bread, meats, eggs, cereal for breakfast; that will do for the week," he muttered to himself. "First I need to walk into town to change my money from Guilders. Thank the lord I had the oilskin wallet which saved some of the money." As he glanced at the wallet; he shed a tear for the men who had not been as lucky.

He gathered the clothing which had dried and donned a dry sweater he had found in the back of the cabin. The sweater was full of holes and covered in webs. He gave it a firm shaking down and a damp cloth and aired it on the radiator. After getting dressed he set off up the path wondering what made the figure disappear from sight earlier. When he got to the hill, he turned and looked back to his hut. "Odd," he muttered, "I can see the hut from here. Why did he vanish?"

The view from the top of the path was breathtaking. In the fall squall you were able to view miles out to sea. Waves bigger than houses crashed into each other, he found he was crying again and wiped the tears away. "*Someday, I will forget the tragedy of the Katerina.*" He thought, "*But not for a long time.*"

Helmut paused at the top of the rise to get his directions correct. Glancing both ways, he spotted a bus stop not far down the road to the right. With a new purpose he set off for the stop. He hoped he may be able to find a town map to

give him some guidance in directions to the bank. He arrived at the stop as the bus passed him. With no money he had to walk the two miles into the town. The cold North winds chilled him to the bone as he trudged wearily into the town. Once he got to town it was easy to locate the bank on the corner of High Street and Church Road. In broken English and with patience Helmut got this money changed and set off to do the shopping. Throughout his shopping trip a thought niggled away at him. He would need to meet Jannine – sooner or later.

A raging sea or a long haul up on the nets he could manage. But to meet the girl you long for and realise you have upset her. This was something Helmut wasn't prepared to do, yet. He was unsure how much he upset her and this made him wary of crossing her path too soon. Unless he wished to feel her wrath, which he thought may be strong for the next day or two. He needed company and he did tell the men. He would tell them where he came from.

"The sooner, the better," he mumbled as he crossed the road which led to *The Pot*. "She may ignore me and after this morning I wouldn't blame her."

Helmut walked up to the door and opened it. As he walked over to the bar—where Jannine was serving a pint to Toby—their eyes met. Out of the corner of her eye she picked the message from Angie. Wink. Jannine turned away with no words and went into the kitchen, smiling. At a loss for words, Helmut looked around the bar an indication of what was happening. All he got was shrugs and blank faces as the men tried to figure what Jannine planned to do next. Angie turned away from the bar to get a Whiskey for Pete, as she did she saw Jannine in the kitchen and smiled.

Helmut ordered his pie and chips from Angie and stood waiting for the order. His mind trying to work out what Jannine was doing.

Pete took his whiskey from Angie and joined Toby and a few of the men at a table. As he sat down he called to Helmut. "Helmut, do you fancy joining us for a drink?"

Helmut turned from the bar and answered, "Thank you. I can't stop long as the hut needs urgent work done."

The men sat drinking for a while before Toby asked the question. "Where are you from, Helmut?"

Helmut finished his drink and replied, "I'm from a little village in Holland."

Pete turned to Helmut and said, "Which explains why we never understood your accent. The accent's Germanic but softer. That is why I thought you may have been Danish or Norwegian."

"No, the *Katerina* had been a joint purchase. We had equal shares in everything and all our money got invested in her." He held his head in his hands and bowed for a minute, tear-filled eyes told the men what he was thinking as he went on. "Now, all of the dreams lay wrecked on the sea and I am here, alone. Thank you for the kind offer, I'll finish my pie and chips and get back to work."

The bar at *The Pot* is small and Angie overheard the men talking as she saw Helmut finish the pie. She went to the kitchen door and nodded to Jannine.

Jannine came out of the kitchen as Helmut reached the door and called out. "Hi, Helmut, how are things with you today?"

He glanced her way and then turned back and without a word as he left *The Pot*.

Jannine turned to Angie. Angie noticed tears forming in her eyes and she gave Jannine a hug. Jannine cried into her shoulder. "That was terrible, Angie. He didn't want me."

The men sitting at the table glanced to the door as Helmut closed the door behind him. He set off back to the hut which had become his home away from home. In the background were the sounds of Jannine crying on Angie's shoulder, "What went wrong? Why doesn't he want me now? I can't stand to lose him."

Angie hugged her young friend and said, "I'm not sure. Perhaps we misjudged his reaction."

Toby got up from the table and walked to the bar. He placed his glass down and said, "I'll tell you what went wrong. He is lonely, lost and thinks he lost the girl he loves. To add to his confusion, your game probably reinforced what he thought. You forget he lost everything he had and wants to know he is not alone. I hope for your sake the damage can be repaired but don't count on anything."

Pete was the first to leave, as he left *The Pot*. He saw Helmut's figure ahead of him and called to him, "Helmut, wait a minute, please?"

Helmut heard Pete's call and stopped to put down his bags to let his friends catch up.

Pete took a minute or two to get to where Helmut stood waiting. After he had caught his breath again he said, "I think Jannine is in love with you. What went on was a silly game and we are sorry we upset you."

Helmut turned to face Pete and replied, "Thank you for telling me this. Maybe she does love me, who can say? I showed her my love. Now the time has come for her to tell me how much she loves me. The next move is Jannine's. I'm not doing any more until I am sure where I stand."

Pete glanced at the old sailor's face and took note of his forlorn demeanour. The face of a man lost in a love which he was unsure. A love so strong, the love ate at him when things went wrong and to Helmut things were going from bad to worse. "Do you want her back?" Pete asked.

Helmut bent to pick his bags up to make his way to the hut and replied. "Nothing would please me more but only if she really wants to be with me."

"I believe she does, when I left she was in tears hugging Angie and wondering what went wrong. Toby was trying to explain things to Angie and Jannine when I left. What are you going to do?"

"Pete, as I said, the next move is up to her to let me know her feelings towards me. I may be up tonight for a beer, or I may stay in and read. I'll make the choice later."

The two friends shook hands and parted. Pete glanced at Helmut as he walked down the pier to his hut and went inside. "I hope she hasn't ruined everything," he muttered to the growing wind as he turned back up the path.

In *The Pot* Toby was finishing his pint and talking to the ladies, "I would say Jannine needs to make the next move. Helmut thinks he is lost and unloved and you need to try to win him back. He is a proud and honourable man. So, making up won't be easy, Jannine. Do you want him bad enough to fight to win him back?"

Jannine wiped the last tears away and replied, "I do, Toby. I want his arms around me again and to feel his strong body next to mine as we cuddle. But, I think this game ruined everything for me."

Angie was about to speak, when the door opened and Pete came in. "Don't count yourself out yet. He does want you back but as Toby said you'll have a hard fight to prove your love."

Angie came from behind the bar to join the conversation. "I'm sorry the game didn't work out but I'm sure things will turn out for the better. You need

to dry the tears and go and talk to Helmut and explain we meant no harm. Gentlemen I must put you out for now, it's time to close for the afternoon. I am sure you have work to do and a family to be with until opening time tonight."

Pete and Toby left *The Pot* and walked to the old harbour. With the bad weather and the poor light there was no fishing to be done. The boats were roped to the wall of the harbour. The men stood leaning against the harbour walls for several minutes. They listened to the sound of the bells. The tide ebbed and flowed against the ships and made the bells chime.

Toby turned to Pete and said, "What do you make of Helmut?"

Puzzled by the question, Pete replied, "What do you mean?"

"Do you believe his story about being lost at sea?" Toby asked.

"I realise a sailor from Holland is a long way off course but it could have happened as he said. He appears genuine to me. Why did you ask?"

Toby scratched his stubbly chin and said, "I don't know. Something seems not right to me"

Pete glanced at the racing waves and replied, "I think he is lost and lonely, Toby."

Toby looked at the beach area, now covered in water and commented, "You may be right, Pete. Do you think he'll be in tonight?"

"I can't say for sure. From our talk earlier I doubt if he'll be in. He did tell me he thought the next move is Jannine's and I agree with him."

The two fishermen turned from the dock with the salty winds on their back and Pete said. "I'd better be getting off home. Doris will put the tea out ready when I get in. I'll stop in for a pint tonight."

Toby replied, "I'll be up tonight. The nights are lonely now Alice has passed away. I'll go back and make a meal for the evening. Will you be in for 8:00 as usual, Pete?"

"Aye, I'll be waiting for you."

The men parted and Toby went back along the sea front keeping an eye on the seas as he walked. "*A big storm coming this way,*" he thought, as he watched the waves crashing.

In his hut, Helmut glanced out to sea to view the storm approaching. "Farewell my friends," he uttered as tears started to run down his cheeks. The memories of the night he got stranded remained harsh.

The howling winds made the stove hard to light. When it chose to light the flames went out too soon to warm the hut. Helmut was not going to be beaten by weather or lack of a fire. He put an old newspaper against the flue and waited for the flame to catch. Once the flame caught and the heat started to warm the hut with its orangey glow. He sat down to have a pipe before he made his meal.

The warmth of the fire and the pipe cheered him up. But he remained mystified by Jannine's behaviour. Was this a game or had she gone off him? He was not sure.

Helmut sat at his table and wondered whether he had the chance of a new life and if he did would the life include Jannine. The decision was not his to make. He wanted her so much but the decision needed to her choice. Only she had the knowledge to show much she wanted him.

To calm himself he sat on the bed and began to read. He picked his book off the bed and began reading. The cover had become torn and tattered with use and the pages brown with age but he vowed not to part with the volume. The book had become part of his heritage.

He got up from the bed and walked across to the stove. As he looked out of his window at the raging tide and muttered. "The wind, she rages tonight but the rain stays away." As he turned and put the kettle on for his cup of coffee, his mind wandered back to the figure he had seen earlier. While he filled the kettle he tried to recall the events of the day. The man he spotted had been walking up the path and then vanished from sight. He was certain this had not been a ghost. The person appeared to be buffeted by the winds.

He tried recalling the incident. In doing so it brought the other vision back to his mind. He was sure that was a ghost. What had been on the headland in the rains and winds and appeared to be unmoved by the elements. "*There are strange things happening around here.*" He began to think.

In the village, Jannine was worried over the repercussions of the game. She wanted Helmut in her life. The little joke which back-fired on her may have ruined things. She crossed the road leading from the chip shop to the supermarket. Turning to Angie she asked her friend. "What do you think I should do?"

Angie took her friend by the hand and turned to face her. "I can't tell you what to do. That is up to you. All I can ask is how do you feel about Helmut?"

"Angie, I want him so much to be a part a part of my life. I'm afraid he'll reject me and I couldn't stand to lose him."

Angie held her young friend closer and replied, "As Pete said, the next move is yours; if you want him, go and let him know, if you are scared of rejection and don't try, you'll be left thinking; what if?"

"What if he rejects me? The way he did at *The Pot* last night."

"You will have your answer and you can stop worrying about him," Angie winked and continued, "I don't think he will reject you."

Jannine asked, "Why do you think that?"

Angie's reply stunned Jannine, "His reaction at *The Pot* was one of confusion not anger. He wants you back. If he wished to end it, we gave him every chance. When he walked out without a word that told me he is upset not angry."

The ladies walked around the village, continuing their shopping as they went. Angie could sense Jannine was unsure of how or when to return to the hut. She said to her friend, "There's a slack period tonight from about 7:30 until 9:00. I can cope with the regulars. So, you are able to be with Helmut for a while to sort the mess out."

Jannine gave her friend a smile and said, "Are you sure you can cope without me for a while? The last thing I want is for you to struggle being short-handed. I think the sooner we sort things out, the better we will understand our relationship."

Angie nodded and replied, "Don't you worry at that time there is only Pete and Toby in. The others usually arrive by about 9:20. If you're back by then we'll be all right."

Jannine smiled and hugged her, "Okay. Thanks for giving me the chance to get the mess sorted out as soon as we can."

Angie's face took a warm glow as she remarked, "I've been in your situation. I know the worry the indecision can cause and the harm the worry does. The sooner you clear things up—either way—the easier your mind will be. I need to go and get some food in for a do we are planning next week. I suggest you go home and get washed to go and meet Helmut and remember I don't need you until about 9:30. I hope you are able to enjoy a pleasant time."

"Thanks again, Angie. I'll see you about 9:30."

The friends parted and went their separate ways. Angie finished her shopping and went back to *The Pot* to get ready for the slow start to the evening. Jannine went home to get ready for her meeting with Helmut. She was still unsure of the greeting she would receive when she arrived at his hut. Jannine decided she had to go through with her action and make some effort to patch things.

The afternoon passed slowly as she clock-watched and at 7:00 she muttered, "Here I go. I hope we can sort this mess out. I love him so much and will miss his strong body next to me if we separate. It was foolish of me to agree to that game, he must be really hurt and confused."

On the way to the hut she passed *The Pot* as Angie opened up. She gave her friend a quick wave and continued down the path by the hills and on her way to Helmut's hut. The gusting winds blew her hair all over her face. "Damn," she muttered as she walked, "I wanted to be at my best for this moment of crisis."

Unaware of the proceedings, Helmut washed his dish and pulled on his old seaman's sweater and jacket ready for his evening walk. When he left the hut, out of habit he glanced up the hill to *The Pot*. Jannine was not in sight and he wondered if he should go up for a drink. He turned towards the headland instead and took a stroll to the end of the pier. His quest had begun - what had been out there and who was the ghost?

Helmut stood looking into the spray and sea mist as the waves rolled in and smashed against the rocks. "Somewhere out there is the answer to the mystery," he muttered. "I wonder if I shall ever find out who or what is out in the shadows and mists?" The harsh wind reminded him that night was approaching and the light was closing swiftly. With a quick seaward glance he turned back to his cabin and walked back from the headland. For some reason he glanced up the path to *The Pot* and this is where the mystery started.

He caught sight of Jannine and waved to her. At the same time as she waved back the stranger appeared by her side for a moment. Then he vanished as quickly as he had appeared. Jannine quickened her pace a little. She seemed a little less unsure of his feelings for her as he had waved to her. She skipped down the path to him and caught sight of a look of concern in his eyes. "What did I do wrong?" she asked as he met her outside his hut.

His reply confused the issue more, "You didn't do anything wrong."

Still unsure what was happening, she asked, "Why are you so glum? I came to talk about my mistake earlier and to apologise for being stupid. You appear to have something on your mind. Do you want to tell me what happened?"

"You are right; I do have something on my mind. Did you pass a man on the way here?"

"Who was supposed to be on the path with me?"

Helmut had to think how to say his next question. Without causing too much worry for Jannine, he replied, "When you waved to me. I thought I glimpsed a man in a sweater standing by your side; he wasn't four feet from you."

Jannine caught her breath as the wind ruffled her hair and the spray from the sea mist dried her lips. "I can assure you. I never set eyes on anybody. Could you describe him to me?"

Helmut paused to think about the man's description then continued, "He appeared to be about 5'6" with dark brown hair. He was short and well built rather than skinny and it appeared he had a damaged..."

He had to rush to her side before he finished his sentence, as she fainted. He picked her up in his muscular arms and carried her to the hut. He carried her limp figure to the hut and gave the door a hefty kick. As it flung open he walked through before the door swung shut behind them. Gently laying Jannine down on the bed, he went to the kitchen to make coffees for them.

After a few minutes, she recovered from the shock. Slightly dazed she said, "I'm sorry about what happened."

Helmut sat on the bed beside her and handed her the cup of coffee as he replied, "You needn't worry. You did nothing wrong but why did you faint before I ended my description?"

Jannine cuddled into him and wept as she replied, "I knew from your description, the man you thought you described was Ian. He damaged his left shoulder the week before he vanished."

Helmut rubbed his chin and passed a comment, "We are still left with the problems of why you didn't pass him. Even though you were so close and why does he appear to me?"

Jannine thought for a second or two before replying. "I may have an explanation for the second part of the problem."

Helmut drank his last mouthful of coffee and said, "What is your theory?"

Jannine lay down on the bed. Her hair flowing like seaweed on the tide as she rolled on to her stomach and replied, "We never found Ian's body. I think his spirit is tied to the hut until we release him from this realm."

Helmut lay beside her. His hands running down the soft skin on her spine as he sensed how she wriggled as he said. "I agree to a point with the theory but why did he appear to me? You passed him on the path and didn't notice him. Another matter of curiosity to me, this is the second time he vanished. The previous time was just after you left. When you glanced back I thought I got a glimpse of him at the top of the path."

The problem about the ghost perplexed Jannine as she said. "I glanced back and only got a brief glimpse of you on your way back to the hut. I was unaware there was anybody else here."

The howling winds outside and the spray being driven on to the windows made the couple huddle for warmth. Hard as he worked, bad light and tired limbs had reduced Helmut's working time and he left numerous gaps. The wind whistled through and even the thick blanket which he found under the bed couldn't keep the wind out.

Jannine laid her hand on his thigh and moved it slowly up. Sensing no reluctance she let it linger a while, gently touching the area around his penis. Helmut pulled her closer to his muscular frame, the muscles still tense from the walk. He turned to meet her head as she moved forward and their heads bumped as they shared their first kisses since the row. Time passed slowly as the lovers lay together. Suddenly, Jannine was startled when her phone rang.

"Hi, Jannine here, can I help you?" she replied.

The reply shook her a little, "Hi. I realise you two love birds need your time but it's almost 9:00, and the bar is beginning to fill. Can you come up please?"

"I'm sorry, Angie. The time flew by. I'm on my way," she closed her phone and turned to Helmut. "I need to go now, will you be up later?"

He glanced at the darkness outside and said. "I think I'll sit and read tonight, if you don't mind."

She smiled and passed the comment, "I'm easy. I realise we are good friends again but what do I tell the others?"

"For the moment, let us play a game on them," he ended and winked.

"So, you do have a sense of humour," Jannine ended her conversation and kissed him goodbye.

Helmut lay on the bed. His book in his hands and thought about the events of the evening, *"I still find it puzzling why I saw Ian and she didn't."* The more he thought about the ghost. The more he convinced himself something deeper than he realised was going on in the area. *"Sea folk are naturally superstitious. There are many strange tales told. Did the other ghost exist?"* The winds brought Helmut back from his deep thoughts. "I'd better put a sweater on. The bed isn't aired and the last thing I need is another chill," he muttered. As he moved closer to the chest in the corner he thought he glimpsed an image out of the corner of his eye but when he glanced at the spot. The only visible were blank boards. *"Now I'm spooking myself,"* he thought.

He sensed something maybe amiss. Each time he turned shadowy forms appeared on the edge of his vision. These visions were more than the usual slight imperfections he got with his failing sight. Those shapes were small, whereas these had the size the size of a small animal. *"Could they be familiars?"* he thought. *"Beings from another realm brought by a spirit and if so what is their purpose? If the shapes were familiars, somebody had contact with the spirit realm. Who is their guide?"*

The sweater dried out and Helmut was grateful for the extra layer of warmth. He could hear the wind blowing the door in the jamb and rattling the windows. The sounds telling him he had run out of time to fix them. This made him grateful for the warmth of the small hut and the meal he ate before Jannine came. "Funny people the English," he muttered as he walked to his bed. "They have a strange sense of humour but I'm glad we sorted the mess out. Before the silly row ruined our friendship."

He rested his tired body on his chair and put his legs on the bed to ease the pains in his calf muscles. "I'll try to find a rocking chair next time I'm in town," he muttered over the sound of the wind.

The aroma of the pipe filled the room and seeped into the wooden boards. The hut began to resume its individuality and sense of ownership again. *"I wonder what became of the previous owners?"* he thought as he sat reading and thinking about Jannine.

Lost in his thoughts, he almost missed the tap on the door as a voice called to him. "Can I come in, please?"

He recognised the voice and went to open the door. He was glad Jannine had taken the time to return after her shift ended. He turned the lock in the

door as the wind caught the door and pushed it into his face. He was quick and got out of the door's path as it slammed into the side of the hut.

"You can come in," Helmut said as he rose from the floor.

"That was close," Jannine said as she entered.

"Perhaps too close for comfort and another thing to add to my list of jobs to do. When the summer comes, I shall have to remember to put add a doorstep."

"You said, 'when the summer comes,' does this mean you plan to stay in the area?"

He kissed her and replied, "Yes. I'm thinking of staying. I've made new friends and found a new lady to love. I can find no reason not to stay."

Jannine blushed as she thought of his words and how much Helmut thought of her. Brushing her hair aside she hugged and kissed her new man as they stood in the room. Both of them were oblivious to the winds outside.

"Let me close the door, before we get blown away. We can talk over a coffee," he said as he parted from her embrace and walked to the door.

"What is the lovely aroma in here, love?" she asked.

"The aroma is my new tobacco. I found a good tobacconist in town and he sells tobacco which is not in general use."

"I love this scent," she replied. While she took a minute or two to notice the aroma had taken hold and seeped into the woodwork. "The aroma is masculine, yet not overpowering."

"Please, don't think wrong of me. Though I'm a seaman and enjoy the rough life. I find a strong tobacco upsets my stomach for days, which is why I prefer a milder smoke."

"You silly man, I love you very much and would never think you wrong for wanting a mild tobacco to smoke. Everybody is different, which is what I like about you." Jannine said as she took his hand and led him to the bed, "I wanted to come down tonight. We never had a chance to talk earlier. I wish to apologise for what I did to you and the pain I caused you."

Helmut turned her face towards him, he said, "Pete told me it was a joke. Perhaps one day I will understand the British sense of humour. For now I'm glad we can put the incident in the past and move on."

Jannine stayed locked in his strong and loving arms and replied, "So am I. I don't want to go a day without seeing you."

The couple clung to each other as they rolled on the bed. He laid kisses on her tender lips as she smoothed his aching shoulders and arms. Both of the lovers were lost in the embrace of love. Their moment was broken for a short time when the kettle whistled.

Helmut rose to make the coffees and as Jannine rose from the bed she knocked his book on the floor. "I'm sorry. I've lost your page now," she said as she blushed.

He gave a laugh and replied, "Don't worry. I can remember the page I was on as soon as I start to read it again."

Jannine picked the book up off the floor. The cover showed a trawler ploughing through waves. She read the title aloud, "*Captain Jan*, who is the author? I don't think any of his books are in our shops."

Helmut poured their coffees and walked over to the bed. As they sat he said, "I am not surprised. The book was written by Dutch playwright Jan de Hartog. The story tells of a ship's crew who struggle against a corrupt company."

Showing interest in the topic, Jannine commented "In some ways, it sounds like *The Wreck of the Mary Deare* by Hammond Innes."

The increase in her interest of his reading material sparked the conversation. "Both books are about seamen fighting injustice you are right. *The Mary Deare* is about a company trying to wreck a ship for salvage. *Captain Jan* is about a ship's crew fighting for their rights and fair pay for hazardous work."

She smile and said, "Your knowledge of books is good, love."

Helmut scratched his matted hair and replied, "Long nights in my bunk as we ploughed the waves. The quietness gave me all the time I needed to read. Without my books I don't know what I would have done."

"Do you only read books with nautical themes?"

"No, I have a wide range. Sorry, I had a wide range, of books on my shelf. Now I am going to need to build a life here with you."

Jannine gave a wistful smile and replied, "I'm looking forward to us doing that."

He gave her a sideways glance as he sipped his coffee and enquired. "What happened when you returned to work? Did you get asked about us?"

Jannine smiled and said, "Oh, yes. They wanted to hear what happened and had we made our peace."

Helmut smiled back and commented, "What did you say?"

She giggled and said jokingly, "I told them we were making progress to mend the rift."

Helmut pulled her into his arms as he said, "You did the right thing. Let them stew for a few days. Did they wonder why I wasn't there tonight?"

Jannine replied, "Only for a few minutes. Pete told them you said you may not be up."

Jannine got up to take her cup to the sink and looked out of the window into the darkness outside. "I realise this may be a bad time to ask but..."

Before she ended her sentence, Helmut replied, "You can stay the night. I realise we have one bed. I can sleep in the chair."

"Thanks, but I can't allow you to sleep in the chair. This is your hut."

"I don't mind. I have been to sleep in worse places. Mainly railway stations on my way to the docks."

She smiled at her lover shyly and said, "You realise doing this will make me feel bad."

Always the gentle, gentleman he replied, "You shouldn't. I made the decision to sleep in the chair."

He sat back in the chair as Jannine took her clothes off. Her young body so beautifully moulded, as if from some rock formation. The rocks waiting to be refined into the sexy lady she may be in a few short years. His body ached to show his love for her and he knew she would not resist. The time needed to be right. He realised rushing now may spoil everything. So, he contented himself with the joy of seeing her undress before she got in bed. She turned over and blew him a kiss before going to sleep. Her hair once again *'Flowing like an oil painting by Millias or Titian,'* he thought as he tried to relax. Try as he may, Helmut failed to find peace to sleep. Being in the chair was no problem. He'd fallen asleep often enough when he had worked himself to a halt. Nor was it the winds and rain. Sailors are used to the weather and he had been able to sleep through most winds. Tonight something played on his mind and the worry made him restless.

He tried to read his book. Alas, he found the concentration needed too hard and he put the book down. He had to content himself with making a hot drink. To try to get warm and relax enough to get some rest. He sat with his pipe gently smoking. He watched as the smoke curled upwards and clung to the

planking like a sea mist on an old clipper. The same sense of ease as when she came to a harbour after a long journey passed over him. The one thing which he remained unclear about was something weird had happened on the path. *'Perhaps this was why I'm uneasy?'* He thought perhaps there may be some rational explanation for this incident. He would ask Jannine in the morning but for now his mind remained ill-at-ease. The puzzle remained a great concern to him.

Sleep eluded Helmut. Jannine slept soundly and woke to an empty hut. "Love, where are you?" she called, hoping her voice would carry to him and he would note the concern. No reply came back. Worriedly she dragged her clothes on and went to the door. She opened the door and went around the hut and found no sign of Helmut. She walked out to the headland and glanced around her and up at the path and the hills up to *The Pot*. For all her attempts to find him, he remained unseen.

Jannine could sense something may be wrong. *"Why did he leave without saying a word after we resolved our misunderstanding last night?"* she thought. *"He may be upset but he is always a gentleman and wouldn't have left without a word."*

Jannine wandered around the hut. She walked for what appeared to be an eternity before she heard a voice she recognised call, "Jannine." She turned to view Helmut's smiling face. "What's wrong, love?" he asked as he moved into hug her.

"How did you get here without me seeing you?" she said as she went to meet Helmut. "I was worried about you. You weren't in the hut when I woke and I was unable to find you," she cried as they met. "What worried me the most is I thought we had cleared the dispute over the row. Your disappearance made me think you never forgave me for the joke."

"I am sorry. I have forgiven you. I had a bad night and wanted to resolve a puzzle which kept me awake last night. That is why I was out when you woke and I didn't wish to wake you. You appeared peaceful while you slept."

"What was the puzzle? Did you solve your question?" Jannine asked excitedly.

"The puzzle is why I saw a man standing at your side, when you didn't. And yes, I think I have a solution," Helmut replied smiling.

"What happened? Please let me in on the mystery."

"While you slept, I took a walk up to the spot and when I arrived I stopped and turned to view the hut. Although I could view the hut and you, you failed to spot me because there is a covered lane in the bushes. The lane can't be have been used a lot otherwise you would have recalled the location. I did find something else, which led me to another mystery."

Jumping up and down like a girl on her first date, Jannine said, "Another mystery. I love this. What's the mystery?"

Helmut paused. He was thinking how to phrase what he found without upsetting Jannine. Then he said, "I can't say for certain as I need to check some facts with Angie and the regulars first."

"This sounds serious."

"I think this is and I don't wish to hurt you."

Jannine appeared aghast as she replied, "ME? What did you find?"

"I can't tell you, yet."

She tapped him hard on the shoulder and retorted, "You can't or won't!"

"I can't tell you. Because I am not sure what I found and I can't tell how you'll take the news."

"I'm not a silly little schoolgirl!" she screamed at him.

"I realise that but I would rather be certain of something. Than tell you something which may hurt you."

Jannine was getting more puzzled by his reactions than she had been at *The Pot* yesterday. "What is going on? What did you find up on the path?"

Helmut didn't answer at first. What he found was something he needed to be sure of before telling her, all he commented was. "Once I get some information, I will tell you. For now please trust me until I am able to clear something up."

This didn't help her. His reply caused more questions that it had answered. "*What's up there? Why won't he tell me and what does he expect to find out?*" She pondered a while and said, "Okay. I trust you but I can't imagine what you expect to find at *The Pot*."

Helmut pulled a jumper over his injured shoulder and replied, "Maybe nothing, perhaps the answers to a few questions. Are you coming up?"

Jannine moved closer and hugged her rugged lover, "It's my day off. I hoped to go to town for some food but I can wait a while. I wouldn't miss this for anything. You have got me puzzled and I hope for some news."

"We can have a coffee before we go up to *The Pot*. There are things I need to take. To be sure our friends understand what I'm talking about."

The couple went inside and Helmut took down two cups and put the kettle on the stove. She thought something was going on and she was not being told because he refrained from making eye-contact. "I thought you said you'd forgiven me for earlier, love," she said with a tone of sadness.

"I did, what happened between us is in the past."

"Why are you avoiding looking at me then?"

"I'm sorry, I'm not avoiding you. I'm thinking of what we may find out and how you may react, if what I think is true."

Jannine said angrily, "I wish you would tell me and we can sort the matter out, here and now."

Helmut took the coffees off the sink top and walked over to his bed. He sat beside Jannine and held her close, "That is the problem. I don't know what I found. I only have an idea and I need the help of you and your friends."

After they had their coffees, the couple walked out holding hands. Helmut closed the door to the cabin. He pulled Jannine to him, "This is for my lovely young lover," he said as he smiled and winked.

Jannine didn't resist despite her impatience and puzzlement of the past days. She replied, "What's this for?" While she kissed his bearded lips and enjoyed the touch of the stubble as it tickled her chin.

He hugged her and replied, "For believing in me, despite our troubles over the past few days."

The walk up the path was hard as the wind gusted and pushed them. He didn't say a word. The only comment he made was "Hhmmm," when they passed the spot at the top of the path.

Jannine felt the tug on her wrist which told her Helmut had stopped walking for a short time. After a few minutes more they walked into the car parking area. "*He'll tell me when he knows for certain,*" she thought as they entered *The Pot*.

Angie was the first person they met and she greeted them with a cheerful, "Hello stranger. We missed you last night, Helmut," as they entered.

The hour was early and the bar almost empty. He took a quick glance around but couldn't find Pete or Toby. "When does Pete come in, Angie?" he asked.

Angie took a glance at the clock and saw the time was 1:00 pm, and replied. "He comes in for a quick half in about twenty minutes and if you are thinking about Toby. He comes in about ten minutes later."

Helmut ordered his pint and Jannine's half pint and took them to the table where she sat. He sat opposite her and on his lap he had a brown bag which appeared ready to burst open. The wind and rains had battered the poor thing and torn it to shreds as the bag rolled along.

They sat patiently, he kept an eye on the clock and Jannine watched him fidget and wondered what the bag contained? And why did he make a big thing of bringing the bag?

On time, Pete entered the bar but this time Toby came in with him. When they saw Helmut and Jannine, Pete said, "You two appear to have made up after last night. We did wonder when you didn't come in, Helmut. Jannine remained unforthcoming about what happened."

The couple hugged and giggled as she said, "The idea was Helmut's. He did say he would get used to our ways sooner or later."

Helmut put the bag on the table and said, "Can you tell me something, please?"

Pete glanced at Toby and Toby looked at Angie, who gave a nod to Jannine in puzzlement. Jannine shrugged her shoulders to show she knew as little as they did of the meaning of what Helmut was going to ask.

Helmut took his time opening the bag. The outside was old and he had no idea what lay inside but he had some ideas. The latch remained hard to undo as the salt water had rusted the locking mechanism but eventually the lock yielded with a gentle touch. He opened the bag and remarked. "Does anybody remember a hidden path? Not far from the top of the path to the hut."

The room remained silent as Angie, Jannine, and Pete shook their heads. But Toby spoke up. "You must mean the path to Clark's Cove. Nobody's been down the lane for years which is why nobody remembers it's there. You want to leave the path alone, Helmut."

The silence crept around the group like a sea mist as Helmut replied, "Why?"

Toby took the last mouthful of his half pint of beer and gulped it down, before going on. He scratched his chin as he tried to remember the story he had been told all those years ago, as a young boy. "Not many people around the area

can recall the path because it had a bad reputation many years ago. A fisherman called Darrel Clark took the house at the end of the lane and if you believe the story I was told; he partook in wicked practices in the house.”

Pete glanced at Toby and said, “What kind of things? I’ve lived in the area over twenty years and don’t remember being told about the lane, Toby.”

Toby turned to Pete and replied, “According to the story. He practised witchcraft and devil worship which is why the town’s folk never mention the lane. We agreed not to think of the lane and its location. All this went on over thirty years ago, Pete, which is why you never knew of the lane. How did you come across the lane, Helmut, the hedgerow covers the entrance these days?”

Helmut’s attention remained taken by something in the bag but he heard his name and came back to the conversation at hand. “I found the lane because of a strange incident a few nights ago. Jannine passed a man on the path, yet never saw him, even though I could see him from my hut. This got me thinking of what happened and I solved this riddle.”

Jannine glanced across at Helmut and asked, “What did you find?”

Helmut went across to her and held her close. “The reason you didn’t spot him is you were looking for the hut. The reason I did spot him is from my angle I was able to catch a glimpse of him. I only caught a glance of the man before he vanished down the lane.”

Jannine smiled and replied, “That would answer the question of why I missed him.”

Angie noticed Helmut fidgeting with something in the bag and asked. “What’s in the bag that is of interest to you? You appear pre-occupied.”

Helmut became more fidgety as he tried to find the right way to ask an awkward question. He worried Jannine may not like the answer. He thought the next information he passed on would give him some information which would lead to further questions. The problem was he would only be able to give suppositions not answers. “Angie, what I have in the bag is of bigger interest to the people here than to me. I am only the person who found the bag by accident. The information you give me may lead to awkward questions. Which is why I wanted some information before telling Jannine what I think is in the bag. And what I think may have happened.”

Toby became more interested and enquired, “What did you find in the bag?”

"The bag is an old seaman's log and the name of the ship is 'Lenora's...'"

Before he had the sentence finished, Angie said, "Lenora's Delight. She was Ian's boat."

Helmut turned as he noticed Jannine wobble as she recalled the day Ian left and never returned. He dashed to her side as she almost passed out with shock. As he put her in a chair he said, "I didn't know about the names but I thought it may be his log. I didn't wish to upset you, which is the reason why I wanted to get some information."

Pete took the log book from Helmut and examined the cover. The writing inside was washed away but in parts legible. He thought a while before he said, "I am in no doubt this is Ian's log. I recognise the writing and the funny drawings he used to add to each page. You said you had an idea what happened, Helmut. Can you tell us what the idea is?"

Helmut glanced at Pete and said. "For now, all I have is a vague idea, which is where your local knowledge will come in. Does anybody remember what became of the house?"

Angie twisted some loose strands of hair. Her mind going over the years to track back and try to remember something, then she replied. "Yes. About fifteen years ago we had a bad storm and the house collapsed into the cove. Nobody bothered about the house or who may be inside. We were glad to be rid of the horrible memories."

"Thank you, Angie. Does anybody recall any unmarked footpaths leading around the headland?" Helmut asked next.

Toby and Pete glanced at each other, as if passing a secret message before Pete said. "There is a path which local fishermen use. The path isn't on the maps as the path is narrow and on the cliff edge. We thought kids may take crossing the path as a challenge and get killed falling on the rocks below."

"Thanks, Pete, this explains why I glanced what I thought may be a ghost."

The room went silent with shock. Angie was first to recover and asked, "You said 'Thought you witnessed a ghost,' does that mean what I think you mean?"

Helmut nodded and replied, "Yes, if you think do I think the ghost is Ian."

Jannine who had been listening and almost got up, collapsed on the floor. Helmut dashed to her side and put her in the seat again, giving her some water as she came around. "Did you say Ian's alive?"

Helmut found himself in a quandary. All he had was a theory which may appear preposterous but did fit what he had found out. "I can't say for sure but I am fairly certain."

Angie came from behind the bar where she moved to when Jannine fainted. "Why didn't he come and say he is alive?"

He looked at her and replied, "I can only tell you what I think. I lack the proof and need more information. Can anybody tell me? Is there a large cave in the cove?"

Pete didn't have to think, "Yes, the cave used to go under the old house. Hundreds of years ago, the locals used the cave as a smuggling den. So, Dave Rees, our history teacher told us."

"Thanks, Pete, this information is strengthening what I believe happened. I can't say for certain but the information leads me to believe Ian's ship was caught by a freak wave. He got washed overboard and landed at the cove dazed. The tide and current knocked him around and he hit his head on the rocks. He was lying unconscious until he woke with no memory of what happened or who was. He has been living in the cave since then. He is eating fish he catches and living off waste bins. I found a variety of wrappers on the paths leading to the cove."

Jannine had some colour in her cheeks again and asked. "Do you think he would remember what we had before he left?"

Angie came in close and gave her young friend a good hug as she said. "I'm sorry, love. If this is true, Ian won't recall anything about you and may not even recall his name."

Jannine sobbed on Angie's shoulder. Her cries sounding like a baby as the baby finds its mother gone, "Oh, poor Ian, I wish we could help him?"

The group gathered around to comfort Jannine. The reality of Ian being alive and having no memory of her and no chance of recovery was hard to accept.

Helmut knelt by her side and held her hand gently. "I'm sorry you had to hear that, love. Now you realise why I couldn't tell you before. Even now I can't prove anything. The only real proof is if I can go to the cave."

Toby and Pete glanced at each other and shook their heads. Helmut sensed the hesitation before the shake, and said, "From the hesitation. Am I correct to assume there is a way from the path to the caves?"

The men looked at each other and Toby answered, "Yes, but the route is extremely dangerous. Even the rescue team are scared of taking the route. You need to be careful. The path gives way where the old house took half the path with it. From that point the rock face won't hold a boy's weight and the drop is sheer."

Helmut paced the bar area, thinking of ways he may be able to find the answers to unresolved questions in his mind. "You are saying, there are two ways to the cave, am I correct?"

Pete was about to answer when the door opened. Jim walked in, and said. "I caught the end of the discussion but if you are thinking of doing, what I think you are. Don't. I've come back from the cove and both ways are too risky. That is the reason nobody goes into the caves."

Jannine leaned on the table and said, "Helmut thinks Ian is living in the cave, Jim."

Jim took a few paces closer to the bar and replied, "Ian may be in the cave. He knows as well as anybody getting to the cave is extremely dangerous. After his disappearance, he probably found he himself washed ashore in the cove and realised he was unable to get out."

Helmut slowed a little and said, "That agrees with what I think happened, Jim. But doesn't explain why I caught a glimpse of him at the hut or on the path. He can't get out of the cove."

Jim continued, "I can't explain everything, he may have found his way out. Desperate people will try things which sane people will not. *'Needs must as the devil drives,'* and Ian needs food and drink. All I am saying is the route to the cave is fraught with danger either way. I can't stop you if you want to go but I can warn you. This is not a good idea."

Helmut stopped pacing and sat at the table by Jannine. Thoughts went through his mind as his hand moved across to hers. She noticed the hand pause and took his hand in hers as she stroked his fingers. "You know I love you and won't stand in your way but I don't want to lose you too. The decision needs to be yours."

The worry on his face was not hard to see. The friends wondered would this brave sailor risk his life for somebody he had not met. Or in search of solutions to questions he may not find the answers for. The cave theory is only that—a theory—and proof was needed to confirm or disprove Helmut's ideas. "I am

not sure if he left the bag but I found the log book on the path leading behind the bushes, Jim."

Jim thought for a while and replied, "It is possible he left them. I didn't say he couldn't get out. The journey is always a risk to take on either path and as Ian used to be a caver he may have been able to get out at some time. I realise the decision is yours but I would advise against trying to get down."

Helmut ran his fingers through his beard and replied. "Thanks for the warning. I will think on what you said, Jim. If I go down I will need to wait for a few days as my shoulders are sore and I need Jannine to massage them. Some things still puzzle me."

Angie asked, "What's on your mind, Helmut?"

"You say Mr. Clark ran the house. Did he have a wife and what happened to her?"

The friends stopped doing what they were doing and looked at Angie. The silence became deafening as they waited with baited breath.

"Did I say something wrong," Helmut asked.

Angie winked at the group, giggled and replied, "No, you are fine. You're looking at the ex-Mrs. Clark, Helmut. I sensed strange things for months. Certain rooms remained locked. The house was filled with strange smells which permeated the drapes and no amount of washing could wash out."

Helmut blushed and said, "I'm sorry, Angie. I didn't mean to upset you by raking over old wounds."

Angie gave a laugh and walked over to him and kissed him. She winked and replied, "That was a lifetime away and one which I don't talk about. No harm done. I put those days to rest when I bought *The Pot*. With the money he had stowed away and thought I didn't know about." She paused and finished her conversation. "It's amazing the things women can do with a hairpin and some determination. I created a secret hole in one of the walls of a room he rarely visited. In there I kept my savings. He got so involved with his Black Magic towards the end; he let me take control of the finances. He never realised I was putting a little back for when he left. I had my eye on *The Pot* for years. I realised I had the ability to make a success of running the inn; which I did." Angie stopped talking and swirled around like a fiery angel taking in her surrounds.

Helmut took all of Angie's explanation in and commented, "You certainly made this a success, Angie. The bar may not be full most of the day but at night it comes to life."

The men rose from their seats and Pete said, "We need to go and do some repairs but we'll be back tonight."

Angie returned to the bar and waved as they left, "Okay. Don't forget tonight is music night, guys." She laughed to herself and started the cleaning.

Jannine finally regained her poise and stood up. She took Helmut's hand as she walked to the door, she called as left. "We'll be up tonight, Angie. For now I am going back to the hut to try and soothe Helmut's shoulders."

Angie got up from filling the sink and replied, "Okay. Can you be here a little before time? Tonight being music night we'll be full in no time."

Jannine smile back and said, "You can count on it." Jannine took Helmut's hand as they left and said, "Back to the hut for us, love." She walked out and closed the door behind her. The couple left the bar leaving Angie alone.

As the room quietened, Angie went into the kitchen and said quietly, "What they don't know won't hurt them." She whispered to a shadowy presence showing on the wall. She closed the doors and went back to doing the glasses.

The howling winds drove the tides up on the rocks as the couple made their way back to their hut. When they got to the hut Jannine stopped and pulled her man close to her. His rain soaked hair streaked down his face as the rain washed down his face. She parted his hair, wiped his face clean and kissed him. As she kissed him she pulled his muscular body to her and squeezed his bottom. Doing this she began to feel his penis rise as she gently swayed against him pushing him onto the side of the shed. "That's my man," she whispered. "I have more for you, once we get inside and I get the chance to ease your aches."

Helmut fumbled in his pocket for his keys and found the key to unlock the door. The aroma of his pipe hung in the air like a gentle breeze playing on your nose. The hut was becoming more like his home than a make shift repair. He smiled as they walked in, saying to her, "I'm beginning to think of this hut as my home, love."

She flung her hair aside and went to grab a towel of the radiator saying "I'm glad. Put the kettle on before we get a chill. Once we've had the coffee, I can rub your shoulders."

He walked over to the stove and put the kettle on. He turned to glance at her and Jannine thought she noticed the look of puzzlement on his face again. "What are you thinking about this time?" she asked.

He got the cups from the cupboard and walked to the sink. Thinking about his reply he said, "I can't say for certain. I think there may be more to what Angie said, than what we heard."

A smile passed her lips as she said, "What do you mean, love?"

He stroked his beard and replied, "I can't say but things appeared to me as if they had hidden meanings."

Jannine gave a short laugh and winked. "That is Angie, she is usually mysterious and mostly she is playing a game. You'll get used to her."

Still unsure Helmut remarked with a grin, "I'll go along with what you say but I am not sure."

While he had been making the coffees, Jannine had moved to the bed to wait for his return. Jannine glanced up at him from her position on the bed and commented, "She does appear to a mystery. We consider the mystery as part of her overall charm and are happy knowing if she wants to let us into her mystery. She will, when she feels the time is right."

Helmut waited for the kettle to boil and poured the coffees. He turned to walk over to his bed he said. "I may be reading too much into things these days. The wariness comes from living in a secluded part of Holland, where strangers are viewed with more suspicion than in most areas."

Jannine smiled and replied, "I wouldn't put too much concern on your reactions. Most people who live in small communities are the same whether the village is fishing or farming. The way of thinking comes with the territory and in some ways this mind set is good."

Helmut handed Jannine the cup of coffee and sat beside her on the bed. His hands holding the cup and holding the night chills back for a short while. He took his left hand from the cup and put it on Jannine's thigh. In doing so he gently squeezed her thigh and ran the fingers up the inside, watching for a reaction from her. Would she reject the action, or would she approve? The answer didn't take long to come as she licked her lips.

Jannine smiled at him and said, "The smoothing is so relaxing."

Not quite sure how far she wanted to go, he asked, "I hope I didn't get too and upset you. Do you want me to stop or go slower?"

Jannine moved closer to him and put her hand on his crotch enabling her to give his penis a gentle rub. She licked her lips and said "After what happened outside a few minutes ago and now this. The last thing I want is for you to stop, love. If I think you go too far, you won't need to ask." She licked her lips and winked as his hand moved to her crotch to rub her pussy.

They caressed each other slowly, gradually building the sexual pleasures. Their fingers entwined and ran in small circles up the insides of their thighs. They tingled with the re-kindled passion which once more was lit and burning. The room appeared to shrink to only the space they took up. They forgot about the howling winds and driving rain which swept the shoreline outside.

He slowly undressed her, taking time to savour the unhooking of each button as the skin behind revealed more pleasure to come. This allowed him time to kiss and lick each new area which became exposed to his gentle touch. His hands had become gnarled and rough to touch after years of fishing. Yet, he still retained the gentle touch of a lover and didn't wish to rush anything.

They put their drinks on the floor and continued to embrace. Helmut teased Jannine by undoing each button her shirt and licking the exposed skin. He took a mental note of her reactions to his tender touches and gauged how to proceed. Jannine was losing herself in the joys of a new found love and whispered in his ear, "If you don't fuck me. I'll have to play with myself to relieve some of the pleasures you are giving me."

He raised his head from her young firm body and replied, "Please, do what you want. I find the sight of a lady in arousal erotic as she plays with herself; loses control and comes." The sound which followed was a zipper slowly being pulled down. He glanced down at her pussy to catch a sight of a few stray hairs poking out over the top of the panties. Even at this early stage, he noticed her panties had become moist. Her hand slipped down and he caught a sight of Jannine's mound with the lips parted ready for her fingers. He sensed his penis getting harder as he watched Jannine enjoy playing with herself. "A wonderful sight," he gently muttered as he went back to kissing and licking her body. Once in a while he heard her moan and stopped to catch a glimpse of her face as she became lost in her ecstasy. Her passion was for love, romance and pure lust for her man and his cock.

With a shudder she called out, "You're so good. I never came that much before!" Helmut glanced down to look at her cum-soaked panties. The stains on

her jeans showed how much she had enjoyed herself. She caught a sight of his glances she said, "Thank you, for the wonderful experience, love. Can you tell me, when do I going to get my chance to share the pleasures you give me?"

Helmut paused a while in his attention to her to reply to question and said, "You'll get your chance. For now enjoy yourself as this time is all about you. I wish you to get the full enjoyment from my attention."

She gave his cock a rub and said, "After what you did, there is one thing I need. I am willing to wait for him to meet her." As she said this, Jannine placed his hand into her wet panties so he could feel her moist pussy.

He licked his lips, smiled and whispered. "The day for us to make love is close and we will enjoy the time all the more for the wait. I can promise you more joys of working with each other to find our passions and allowing them to grow. My wish is to be able to lick you all over."

Jannine's smile lit her face up like a candle on a dark night as she replied. "Being licked and kissed all over is something worth the wait. Your hands may be rough but you still have a gentle touch which is so arousing. Can I do something for you today, love?"

Helmut didn't need to think. His back ached and his shoulders were stiff as he replied, "Can you rub some ointment in please, love?"

Jannine brushed his thigh as she got up from the bed and replied. "I'll do it, anytime you want."

Jannine got off the bed and walked over to the corner of the hut where the medicines were stored. After a short search she returned with the shoulder rub which Helmut asked for. She unscrewed the top and put some of the ointment on her hands. "Can you move in a little closer please? We're at the wrong angle for me to give you the rub unless you can turn around a little."

Helmut turned slightly to Jannine so she would be able to rub the cooling ointment on his wounds. "Thank you for this. I tried to rub the ointment in but there are places I can't reach as my shoulders are stiff."

The wounds on his back were old and the sores had not had the chance to heal properly. Helmut had endured more than many men would have. His body had suffered the harsh weather of the North Sea. Jannine took her time rubbing the ointment on his strong muscular back. She found she got aroused by her man's sexy aroma. The heat from the ointment mixed with his body heat to fill the bedroom with the scent of the ocean. The smooth skin of her long fin-

gers was a pleasant change from the harshness of his. With her position she had the angle to apply pressure and rub the ointment into the aching sections of his back. Rather than waiting for the ointment to seep in slowly.

Helmut moved his shoulders and said, "Your fingers are long and firm. Thank you for doing the rub for me."

She continued to rub as she replied, "You're welcome. Ian used to like me doing this. Our friends were happy he had me to help him at the end of the day. The men went home to a family and he had to wait until I could come to soothe him. At times life got in the way." Jannine sighed, "Your back looks really sore. How do you cope with all the cuts? The pain must be terrible."

Helmut turned a little more to face Jannine and said. "Some sores appear raw but they are only skin lesions and don't hurt as much now. The sores did hurt for months after I did them. When you have a job to do, you have to do it as best you can."

He moved closer to Jannine and pulled her into his sweet smelling body. The aroma was turning her on and she moved her hand to his crotch and stroked his penis. The fact he didn't object became an even bigger turn on as she sensed her pussy getting moist under her panties again. The sensations in her pussy made Jannine squirm as her juices moistened her lips. Being a gentle man, Helmut didn't rush as he took her in his arms and slid his fingers into her panties. He rubbed her mound, easing his fingers into her as she moved her mound down his finger in time with his motion of easing inside. "Oh, this is lovely," she moaned as the joys overtook her.

The couple rolled together on the bed as he pulled her trousers down. The rousers lowered revealing a damp patch on her panties showing her mound willing for love. Helmut knelt between her legs and started to lick up the insides of her thighs. He took his time to move slowly, giving him the opportunity to maximise Jannine's pleasures. He kissed and licked her pussy. His tongue was darting in and out of her like a smooth love snake willing to give more than take. In doing so he was able to taste her juices as she lost control. Unable to hold herself any more, Jannine pulled his head into the mound to such an extent his nose was on her mound. In rubbing it on her, she got aroused and turned over to pull him down. He lay on the bed as Jannine pulled down his trousers to free his penis. When she saw the penis come to life she decided to lick the shaft prior to mounting him.

Jannine climbed on Helmut and eased her pussy down his shaft, sensing the strong and yet sensitive man below her. She took her time in giving him as much pleasure as he had been giving her only a short time before. She enjoyed the sensation of having his penis in her. Even more, she enjoyed controlling the action. Jannine bent to kiss her man and sensed his penis move against her pussy. "Naughty boy," she joked, "trying to get out before mammy has finished." She slid his penis back in and continued to control Helmut's action, Jannine was wondering if he would ever come. Then she felt Helmut's juices squirt in her and noticed him go limp. "I wondered if you wanted me as much as I wanted and needed you, love," she said as she bent down to kiss him again. Then she rolled off and lay beside Helmut, letting her hand rest on his penis as his hand rested on her mound.

They lay together for a while before Jannine spoke, "You didn't object to me taking control did you, love?"

Helmut rolled over and kissed as he replied, "No, love, I find it both refreshing and arousing that you realise what you want, and you are not afraid to ask me if I can do things which please you. By telling me what you like. You take pressure off me and this lets me know you want to make love. Rather than have me wonder are you doing it for my sake?"

Their aroma mixed with the aroma of the ointment. The aroma filled the room with a musty scent which was even more sensual than before. By adding memories of passionate love, Jannine was swept away with a sense of eroticism. The like of which she had never read about, yet alone realised she would experience.

Jannine and Helmut lay locked together for some while, savouring the sweet erotic sensations of love fulfilled. She couldn't get used to the smoky eroticism of Helmut and how different he and Ian were in character. Ian had been raised on a farm and moved to the coast in his teens. He appeared to be in his element in the boat. The swaying of the deck never bothered his footing. This puzzled Jannine as Ian had been a good swimmer and yet, he had vanished. Why did he find keeping afloat too much trouble?

Helmut on the other hand was a hardened sailor. Helmut smelt of the oak smoked kippers; which are sold in the locally. Not the yellowy ones sold in the shops filled with colour but the real smoky brown original kippers. He lay silent in her arms, hardly stirring as he relaxed. Jannine gazed lovingly at him. She

didn't wish to lose these moments, moments she had not been able to share with Ian.

Outside the winds died and peace came to the Point. The peace was broken by cry from Helmut as he stirred. "Katerina, where are you?" he called out and when he realised what he had done. He said, "I'm sorry for startling you in that way."

Jannine rolled over and stroked his hairy chest as she said, "You don't need to apologise, love, I understand. You lost a lot of friends during the storm and realise none of them can be buried until the sea gives up her dead. The thought must haunt you. I can't imagine how your sorrow at losing so many friends. When I lost Ian I was distraught with the loss of my loved one."

"Being fishermen the thought is always with you. You learn not to think about it too much; out at sea. You need all your senses concentrating on the catch and the weather. We don't have time to ponder when one slip could mean death. The thoughts of the day become the demons of the night. That is enough about my concerns and demons. Do you wish for a cup of coffee and a cheese roll?"

Jannine sat on the side of the bed. She watched as Helmut rose from his rest and said, "Yes please. You do the rolls and I'll put the coffee on." She got up and gave him a soft kiss on his cheek and whispered, "Please don't worry. I'm here for you."

Helmut tugged a shirt on and winced as the pain shot through his muscles. "Thank you. I need comforting sometimes at night when I imagine seeing ghosts of lost friends."

Jannine rubbed his shoulder and said, "It would appear that I'm going to be your nurse for a good while longer." She winked and licked her lips at the idea and continued, "I don't mind as it's all a part of our loving relationship. The sensation of us lying together was so calming. I didn't want the moments to end. I never had the chance of lying like we did with Ian. I loved the scent of your smoky sexiness when you were still."

He put the kettle on the stove and turned to Jannine, hugging her he whispered, "I'm sorry. I get so involved in my sorrows I forget about yours. Can you forgive me?"

The couple moved closer and held each other as they kissed and Jannine replied, "I can't forgive you. You have done nothing to offend or hurt me. We

are a couple and we have our private sorrows which will remain private. Even though we share tender moments the loss will remain private.”

Shadows crept across the cabin floor as the day's light faded into dusk, “We don't get much light do we.” Helmut said as he closed the thin curtains over the kitchen window.

Jannine moved over to the bedroom table and as she leant across she said, “No. At this time of the year we're lucky if daylight lasts until 5:00pm.” When she finished she blew him a kiss and patted the bed next to her. “Come and eat your supper, love.”

Helmut brought the coffees over to the bed as Jannine smoothed the sheets so they could sit comfortable. With the enjoyment they had received from each other there was no need for her action. But she thought she needed to do something to try and calm down after the excitement. They sat on the bed and ate a simple but filling meal. The only light was the warm glow off the stove and the orange of the sunset as they cuddled together.

After the meal they decided to go outside and listen to the sound of the waves crashing. Jannine caught Helmut looking up the path to where Ian had previously appeared. “What's on your mind, love?” she asked.

“I was thinking about Ian and the cave. Do you know of a route along the path from the shore?” he replied.

“There is a path, but...” Jannine remarked.

He wondered at the half answered reply, which left more worries that it cleared. “What is wrong with the path?”

Jannine moved in closer and cuddled him before she said, “Unless you're a mountain goat and can land like a butterfly. I would advise against using the path. Since the house collapse, the rock face has become too dangerous. Pete and the rescue crew avoid using that route to the caves.”

Helmut held her hand as they took the walk to the headland. With the winds blowing along the shore the white caps of the waves stood out against the dark of the sea. Helmut stood and crossed himself as he gazed out to sea. The tears of his loss dripped through the craggy lines on his face and down his beard.

Jannine gave his hand an extra squeeze and took her man in her arms, “For the Katerina?” she whispered. Her voice was soft against the roar of the waves.

"Yes. I am having trouble coping with the losses which occurred and the agony of surviving the wreck."

"What you are suffering is called 'Survivor Guilt.' It is the most natural guilt after what you went through. The thing you need to recognise is nothing which happened was your fault. I realise that is going to be hard but I'm here for you."

"Thank you, love, you are my rock in these hard times," Helmut said before he kissed her.

"And you are my rock too, we are here for each other when the dark times arrive," she remarked as she kissed her lover.

They stayed locked together as the wind swept along the beach. The wind moved the litter of the late tourists along the shore. As well as the usual rubbish from the sea, bits of wood and seaweed. Jannine felt him tense up as they huddled against the wind., "What's up?" she whispered.

Helmut turned her slowly to face the direction he had been facing and said, "If Ian is in the cave. Who is this approaching?" He said with a tremor in his voice as they viewed a ghostly figure coming towards them.

Approaching them from through the sea spray was a thin man in a sailor's hat and sweater. The man appeared to be dragging his left leg which appeared to be badly smashed.

The man appeared to be slim and his clothes and dressed in rags but an eerie calmness appeared to surround him. His appearance looked as if the sea had brought forth one of its many dead souls. Jannine shivered as she cuddled Helmut as the man drew closer to them. At the moment she as about to scream, he walked through the couple as if they didn't exist. "That was beyond creepy," she said as she held Helmut closer to her.

Helmut turned to follow the ghost's progress but failed to find any trace of where he had gone after visiting them. "I've read of things like this many times but never been a witness. That is amazing," he commented as Jannine refused to let go of his arm.

"What do you mean, amazing?" she almost yelled in fear. "The experience was bloody scary. What do you mean? You read about these things happening before."

Helmut took a minute to find the words to describe the phenomena and continued. "He was never any danger to us. Didn't you catch a glimpse of the far off stare in his eyes? Too him, we didn't exist."

Jannine shook like the last leaf on the branch on a windy but she replied, "He appeared scary enough to me. No, I had my eyes closed when he got to us. I couldn't bear to think what he had in mind for us."

Helmut continued his explanation, "We were in no more danger than we would be going for a drink at *The Pot*. He is from another time and place. He is lost and looking for his ship mates which is why he is harmless. Do you know who he may be?"

Jannine started to calm a little and replied, "I have no idea who is. Toby said he found some old ships records in the school attic. Perhaps he will be able to shed some light on our visitor."

Helmut took her arm as they walked back up the path to the hut. On the way he paused and glanced up to *The Pot*. For a second or two as something had caught his eye; the faltering step caught Jannine's attention and she asked, "What's on your mind, love?"

He stopped and turned her to him as he kissed her lips and said, "Do you notice something odd about *The Pot*?"

Jannine turned back and replied, "The only thing I can see is Angie waving to us; what do you think is up there?"

"If you look carefully, you may view a dark patch to Angie's right and slightly behind her."

Jannine glanced up the path which led to *The Pot*. With a lot of strain she thought she glanced what may be the apparition Helmut was talking about. The strange thing about the situation was Angie appeared to be aware of the presence. At first glance she appeared to be talking to the apparition. "That's weird," Jannine muttered.

Helmut shook his head and replied, "I know, I spotted her too. She appears to be chatting to the spirit as if they are old friends."

Jannine ran her fingers through her matted hair and commented. "Our Angie is full of surprises as you'll find out but this is a new one on me. I wonder who he is."

"And what is their connection?" Helmut added, "Do you want to walk up and find out?"

Jannine laughed and hugged her lover and whispered in his ear. "After this, try and stop me." She winked and started up the path.

The couple were walking up the path to *The Pot*. When Jannine stopped at the entrance to the hidden path leading to the cliff edge, her mind was on the thought of Ian. For a minute or two she gazed down the path as if trying to get something out of her mind.

Helmut stood by her side, quietly thinking his thoughts. When she turned back, he glimpsed the tears in her eyes. "You're wondering if Ian's in the caves aren't you," he said as he held her close.

The tears travelled down her cheeks as she replied, "Yes. I guess I'll never get my answer now, will I."

He hugged her and wiped the tears away as he replied. "I can't say for certain but there may be a chance to find out. I have an idea."

Jannine looked into his clear eyes and cried, "Please, don't go down the path. I can't bear the thought of losing you too. The edges are so crumbly even the rescue team daren't use the path now."

Helmut pulled his young lover to his firm body as he comforted her, "I won't be doing anything too dangerous. My plan need to be worked out yet and there is a possibility the plan may not get put into action."

She held him tighter and said, "I couldn't live without your love now. I would rather keep you and think of Ian as a happy memory. Than lose you in an attempt to solve the mystery of his disappearance. For all we know he may not be in the caves."

Helmut turned back to the path up to *The Pot* and said. "That is why I need some more information from Pete and Angie. Their input is vital before I consider if the plan is feasible. So, shall we go and find out about the ghost from Angie." He said as he gave her a loving squeeze. The intent was to take her mind off his plan and the prospect of losing him in the rescue attempt.

She turned back to the route up the hill and with a hug and a kiss said, "The idea seems a good one,"

Even from a distance, it was easy to see Angie was in conversation with somebody. If you were unaware of the spirit you would put her chatting down to the ramblings of a lonely lady. Yet Angie was far from being lonely. Her age allowed her the freedom to be herself with little concern for opinions of other people's reaction to her.

Jannine and Helmut walked across the car park. They were aware of the spirit but it appeared unaware of them. "Hello strangers," Angie called out as she saw the couple approaching.

Jannine called across the car park, "Hi, Angie, how are you doing?"

Angie stood up and flung her hair aside and replied. "The body is tired but the mind is still as fresh as it was." She winked at Helmut and continued, "If I was younger I might have made a play for you. You and Jannine make a lovely couple. I am pleased for you. Come and sit down before the afternoon rush arrives and have a drink on the house."

"Thanks, Angie," Jannine replied, "we need to ask you something."

Angie got up from the table and said, "Your question can, I won't be long."

Angie left to get the drinks as Helmut turned to Jannine and said, "How shall we approach this?"

Jannine giggled and replied, "The best way to ask Angie is to be open. She may be brusque but she is as honest as they come and respects your opinions."

Almost as if on cue, Angie appeared in the doorway. "Here we are, a warming Irish coffee for each of us on this windy day. You can enjoy the drinks and ask me your questions now."

Jannine started, "When we were on the point, we had a visit from a spirit. Yet, he appeared not to be aware of our presence. He walked through us and up to here and..."

Angie laughed as she replied, "You noticed the shimmering behind me and heard me talking to the spirit. Yet I didn't seem worried about the spirit."

Helmut nodded and said, "Exactly, Angie, why didn't the presence worry you?"

Angie laughed again and replied, "Why should the spirit worry me? '*Old George*' has been around for years. His appearance spooked me in the beginning. Now we're old friends. He's harmless; he's trying to find his ship mates and wanders the shores lost in a time loop."

"Angie, can I ask you something, please?" Helmut said.

Angie giggled and replied, "Sure, Helmut, I hope I can help you in some way."

Helmut paused a little, and continued, "How safe would you say the rock face is above the caves?"

Angie's face went white for a moment as she recalled the rock slide. "Please, don't go down, Helmut. The face crumbles as soon as you walk on it and with the recent rain. The ground is too slippery for a foothold."

"I wish to find out if Ian is in the caves. To try and put Jannine's mind at ease."

Jannine shook her head and replied, "I told you, if he is in the caves, I am not worried. I would love to see him after all these years. You said with the shock of the accident and the concussion. He probably won't remember me. I don't want to risk losing you trying to find if he is in the caves."

Angie hugged Jannine as she cried and said, "There's your answer. She loves you so much she can't bear the thought of losing you. You need to remember, Ian lived in the area for years and is used to the ledges and caves. He used to fish before he got the boat, if he is in the caves, he is safe. If he wanted to come out, he knows the safest ways. If you went down; you would risk a serious injury, Helmut."

Helmut walked over to where Angie was comforting Janinne and said, "I promise to take all safety measures. I want to return to your arms as much as you want me. But I have a deep need to satisfy my curiosity about the documents."

Jannine's tears fell on his shoulder as she said, "Love; I'm scared of losing you too, especially when the risk could be for nothing. Have you considered Ian might not be in the caves?"

Helmut held his new love close and replied, "I did for a short time. When I found the documents I realised there is a chance he might be alive."

Tears ran down Angie's face as she said, "I don't suppose we can get you to chance your mind."

He hugged both ladies and said softly, "I'm sorry, I need to do this."

Angie wiped her eyes and replied, "I might not agree with you but the decision is yours. You can't go yet. Can give me a day or two to contact Pete and the guys? We can talk your idea over to find out if there is a way to put the plan in action."

Helmut replied, "Thank you. I didn't intend to try for a few days. I need to sort things out."

The two friends departed from *The Pot* and took time to do some shopping in Bartlebay. Helmut's list included climbing gear and a helmet. Jannine's list

was home based with coffee, milk and bandages for his battered body. A body which she thought was not strong enough to do this task. Try as she might Jannine couldn't talk him out of doing what she thought was too dangerous; even if Helmut was able to get information about Ian and the caves.

On their way around the town they met Pete and Toby. The men had decided to stop mending their nets as the light was so poor. Toby had taken the time to do a little shopping and Pete had found himself at a loose end for once. "Hello, my young Jannine," Toby said as he winked at her. "How are you faring down at the hut? I recall from a visit or two to Ian that the hut is cold on these windy nights."

Jannine glanced over to Toby and replied, "Hi, Toby, we are fine, thanks. We are out shopping for the afternoon. We'll be popping into *The Pot* on our return in a couple of hours. We'll have a pint and some of Angie's stew before turning in for the night. Will you and Pete be there?"

Pete glanced up from his mending and said, "If Angie's doing stew tonight, you can count on a full house. Her stews are guaranteed to bring people in, Helmut."

Helmut smiled and said, "That is good news. I miss the thick stews we had at home. We were able to make only thin stews on the *Katerina*. I'm pleased to hear you'll be in tonight. I wish to discuss something with you and my other friends."

Pete shook his head and replied, "Angie phoned and told me about your idea. I need to say I think what you are planning is too risky. After the rock slide and the rains we had. The face will not be safe and you could end up seriously injured if not paralysed from the fall, Helmut. I realise you need to make the choice but I thought I'd warn you of the dangers."

Helmut replied, "Thank you for your concerns, Pete. I have been warned about the dangers from everybody and I am taking all the safety measures."

Jannine hugged her man and said, "Toby, I tried to talk him out of it. The more I tried, the more he seemed to want to go ahead."

Pete glanced at Toby and said, "If you are going ahead. You'll need to give the men a few days to plan what to do. We need an emergency plan in case things go wrong. Getting to the caves isn't easy at the best of times. Jim hasn't had a chance to take a look at the conditions of the slope around the entrance.

We'll have to get in contact with Jeff at the library. He can run a check what the ground is like after the rockslide and rains."

Helmut glanced out to sea and said, "I thank you for your help. I don't plan on going yet as my shoulder is a little tender."

Jannine winced and replied, "That is an understatement if I there was one. I notice how you cringe when the bedding gets on your shoulder. I realise you don't want me to see you as weak but you went through hell before we met. I think your shoulder needs to be rested not put through more strain. I wish you would put this plan off for at least a month to get your strength back, love."

He hugged Jannine and replied, "I will take all the care I can not to put too much strain on the shoulder. If I delay too long the weather will stop me doing what I want until spring."

Pete replied, "If Ian has been in the caves all this time, a few more months more won't matter."

Helmut glanced at Pete and said, "I think they will. I need to try and get in the caves as soon as we can."

Jannine gave him a quizzical glance and asked, "What do you mean?"

Pete glanced quickly at Helmut and said, "I think I know what you might mean. The weather is closing in and the light is getting worse by the day. If we don't move soon, we won't be able to get down until the spring."

Helmut nodded his agreement, "You are right, Pete."

Still puzzled, Jannine passed a comment, "As much as I loved Ian. I don't want to lose you too. I don't know what difference holding off for a few months will make if he has been in the caves for years."

Helmut's reply shook Jannine, "The difference is before you didn't think he was alive..."

Before he finished, she cut in with, "We don't know if he is alive. I don't want to lose you on some wild goose chase!"

Pete replied to her comment with, "Jannine, we realise how much you loved Ian, wouldn't you like to find out if he is alive?"

"Not if the search means I lose Helmut too, Pete. I can remember my time with Ian and those memories are always with me. Now I am starting to make new memories with Helmut. Our new memories are more important to me, as I got to find out about your life. I realise you need to find the truth, if only for your peace of mind."

Helmut sighed and replied, "I am sorry my desire upsets you but you are right. I would never rest, if I thought I might have been able to find Ian."

Jannine walked over to him and kissed his stubbly chin and whispered, "May God go with you, please be careful. We need to get some things from town. We'll drop them off at the hut and meet you in *The Pot* in a couple of hours."

Toby and Pete glanced at the couple and Pete replied, "We'll be in tonight, pet."

Jannine and Helmut left the men on the quay side and he asked, "Why did he call you, pet?"

Jannine giggled as she replied, "Don't worry, nothing is going on. 'Pet' is a friendly term which Northerners use, all the term means is close friend."

The afternoon passed slowly for Jannine. Though they were together she felt distanced from Helmut, as though he was lost in a nightmare world. When he looked her way it appeared to Jannine as if he didn't notice her. He had been quiet from the time they left the quay until they got back to the hut. By this time, she had too much of being ignored and through tears she begged. "Please tell me, what's happening, love. You haven't said a word all afternoon and you appear scared of something?"

Closing the door behind him as he entered, he said. "I'm sorry, getting all these ropes and tackle for the rescue attempt brought back memories." Jannine caught the sight of tears forming in his grey eyes. The eyes which once showed deep love now had been shaded with loss and pain.

Jannine had moved to the bed and replied, "You are a dear and lovely man. Come here for a cuddle and let me try to ease your pains. Please remember, if you don't want to go ahead with the rescue, nobody will think any less of you."

The grey light of the late afternoon peeked through the gaps in the boards. This gave Helmut the appearance of a ghost as his face grew pallid and he replied, "Thank you. I apologise for these lapses into melancholy. I will always miss the Katerina and my friends in Holland."

He sat by her side and she said, "I understand, I will always keep a place in my heart for Ian. Although I was born close by, there are times I think I'm a stranger in the area and nobody cares for me. It's your love which brought me back from my gloom."

Helmut gave a shiver, "It appears to me as a newcomer to the area, you and Angie get on very well."

Jannine moved closer to hug Helmut and felt him trembling. "Angie is my best friend, or she was until we met. We do get on well but even when I am with her I sense loneliness within her. She realises what has happened in the area and our shared experiences became a big part of our friendship."

The fading light and the hot drink which she made prior to going to the bed; did little to ease Helmut's tensions. He would glance at the window and stare out at the emptiness beyond the glassy surface. He appeared lost in a time loop like the ghost of George. His thoughts were out on the sea; on a trawler fighting the surging waves. With nets filled with a catch which had to be hauled in or the boat would capsize. But to no avail; six men gave the haul everything they had to offer and one survived to relive the horror. Their souls unable to rest until they bodies were buried. He hoped against hope the bodies would turn up and his friends might be laid to rest. In his heart he knew it remained a forlorn wish. The sea rarely gives up her bodies.

Snuggled close in, Jannine said, "I realise I can never take the pain from you. I wish I was able to ease the sorrows of losing your friends so cruelly that night. But if you need to talk, I'm here for you, love."

Helmut shook his head, as if clearing cobwebs and replied, "Thank you. I'm sorry I keep drifting away. My soul won't rest and I keep seeing the ship as she went down, taking my friends as she capsized. I was fortunate in a way. I was on the port side, when she turned over. I got thrown clear of the suction and now I live with the horror of the night."

The gloomy afternoon light tried to get through the windows but years of dirt and neglect held it back. The only light came from the fire. Not even the warming orangey glow did little to help Helmut lift his spirit. He sat drinking the coffee, lost in a wilderness of pain. "When we finish our coffees we had better get up to *The Pot* I want to talk to some of our friends."

Brought back to here and now, Jannine said in a huff, "So, you're going ahead with the plan."

He blinked at her sudden outburst and tried to defend his position. "I realise you are concerned about my safety. I respect those worries but we need to get down to the caves soon."

She stood arms crossed, her black hair catching the glow and making her beauty appear fierce and witchlike. "You do realise. You can hardly raise your shoulder. How the hell do you plan on climbing down the face and hanging over the cave entrance?"

"God, love you look so sexy when you are angry. Your eyes appear to glow with passion."

Jannine was not to be sidetracked by flattery as she continued her tirade. "Right, Helmut Chabrier, you can cut out the flattery and BS. I AM telling you here and now. This plan is too dangerous to think about in the summer, never mind after all this rain."

Helmut paused and realised, this was the first time she had used his full name. He knew this meant he was in deep trouble. "Don't you wish to find out about Ian, love?"

Still sanding in the middle of the hut, she said, "Not if I lose you but don't let little Janine stop you."

He turned to face her and said. "Your remark was not only uncalled for but out of character."

Still angry at being ignored, she bit back with, "How would you know about my character? Or how I feel about you? You are obsessed with this plan and even people who have experience of the dangers can't dissuade you from going ahead. Why should one silly little girl who loves you make a difference?"

The sad desperation of her tone hit him like a hammer to the chest as he said. "I'm sorry. I never meant things to get this involved. After the *Katerina* loss, I became so introverted and lost all sense of proportion. I need to do this. I need to find out if Ian is in the caves. Not only to put your mind at ease about him. I think if I find him—or if I don't—one way or another. I hope the result will put my mind a little at ease over the loss of my friends."

Jannine's tears of desperation couldn't mask her fear that he might die. "I realise how much you need to find out. I can't bear to lose you on what might turn out to be a fruitless venture. Even if Ian is in the caves, you said, he probably won't remember who I am. I have to accept you are going ahead, despite our concerns. So, finish your coffee and we can head up to *The Pot*."

The walk from their hut to the car park appeared longer than usual. Neither could find the words to break the silence. The silence had started when he said he was going ahead with the plan.

Standing at the corner of the car park and looking across at *The Pot*, Jannine wondered. "What lay ahead for the man she loved? "Her young body desired his firm body more than ever. At the back of her mind she realised she may lose him. At the same time, she realised that no matter what she felt for Helmut. She had to allow him to do tackle this dangerous task or risk losing his love by standing in his way. "Oh, the problems of being in love," she muttered.

Helmut sensed her trepidation as she pulled back slightly before he turned, "Did you say something, love?" he asked.

Embarrassed she replied, "No, love. I was thinking aloud and didn't realise you heard me."

The slight pause for thought didn't get passed him. He thought about what he might lose as he said. "I can imagine your thoughts about this plan. You also realise I need to go ahead to rest my mind."

She turned to him and with a flurry of jet black hair swirling around her like gossamer wings. Without a pause she pulled him closer to her and gave him a deep and loving kiss which took his breath away. "I don't think you realise how deeply I love and desire you. I want you more than I ever wanted Ian. You, mad, sexy Dutchman and I can't bear the thought of losing you."

Helmut pulled her closer as she stood back to get her breath and replied, "Jan, your mad and sexy Dutchman. Has every intention of returning to his young lover. I was cast away on a foreign shore and found love I had never known."

The tears started to flow down her cheeks. Jan wasn't bothered if he saw them. She loved him and desired his sexy love. Yet she realised she might not see him alive again after this scheme. "I know you are a good sailor but this is a different danger and one you are not used to and can't predict."

He wiped the tears away and said, "I realise people in this area are more familiar with the caves than me. That is why I asked for their help."

Jan's tearful plea broke his heart when she said. "My point is you are the one on the end of the line and the one I may lose. Helmut, you showed me your shoulder. I can tell you, if you slip you will not be able to take the fall on them, love."

He held her for a minute gently in his strong arms and said, "I don't intend to slip. If I do, I am sure Pete and the men can take the strain. They are rigging a

block and tackle at the top. I had a glance at the rocks from the ledge a few days ago. The entrance appeared accessible from one or two places along the shore."

Jannine stopped to think and replied, "Yes, you can get in using the old longshoreman's road. The road has been out of use for as long as I can recall. I have no idea how ground will stand up after these years." Still not convinced of anything other than Helmut would go ahead with the plan. Jannine nodded her agreement and set off for *The Pot* arm in arm with her man.

As they approached the inn, they could hear a lot of noise from inside. "From the sound of it, tonight will be a busy night. I probably won't see a lot of you once you get to work, love," he said as he kissed her.

She giggled and replied, "What did you expect with talk of going to the caves and finding Ian? His disappearance was the talk of the town for months and now you plan to dig it up."

Helmut looked at the ground and said, "I am sorry. I never meant to stir up trouble and bad memories for you, or anyone else."

She pulled him in tight and gave him a kiss, saying, "You silly, sexy Dutchman, nobody is upset. We're curious to find out if anyone is done there."

Helmut opened the door and allowed his lady to enter. Jannine took a quick glance around and headed for the bar to help Angie with the evening's orders. Pete and Toby sat in the far corner studying a map and beckoned Helmut over. He waved and went to the bar to get a pint on his way to meet the men.

The group at the table included two men Helmut hadn't seen before. Pete introduced them as Ray Cooper. Ray came from a fishing family in the area and knew the condition of the caves as well as anyone. The other man was Paul Harker. Paul used to be the local lighthouse keeper. He had moved recently and now lived in the house at the far end of town. Mainly because he loved the seclusion and the quiet allowed him time to write. The group chatted about Helmut's plans and Ian's mysterious disappearance all those years ago. A mystery the village never solved.

The last man to join the group was Dave Marsh. Dave came in as Angie came out of the kitchen and he caught the smell of freshly cooked fish pie on the air. "Mmmmmmm that smells lovely, Angie." He said with a wink and a nod, as he moved to the bar.

With a wicked smile and a twinkle in her eye, Angie licked her lips and said jokingly. "David Marsh. Do you think I would let you go without a hot meal on such a wicked night?"

Not a lot got passed Dave, as he replied, "Shoot, if she called me David, I am in deep trouble." He said with a laugh as he reached the table. "I'm sorry I'm late. I took a look down the path to see if there was anything we could utilise for the climb down. The only trees strong enough to withstand a fall are on the edge of the cliffs."

The men sat talking. The only sound Angie and Jannine heard was a low mumble. Now and then one of the men would get up for a drink, or to use the toilet. In the main they didn't talk above a low mumble. The ladies didn't care too much. The inn remained busy and the night flew passed.

Angie and Jannine closed the bar for the night. Jannine was about to leave with Helmut. When Angie said, "Have you got time for a ghost story before you go back to your hut, Helmut?"

The thought of hearing a ghost story always intrigued Helmut and he replied, "Certainly, Angie."

Angie closed the doors and said, "Sit down. I'll put us on a coffee and the last of the pie and tell you a true ghost story."

Jannine and Helmut took a seat at the table nearest the bar and waited for Angie's return. From the kitchen came the aroma of fresh coffee brewing—the real stuff—not the cheap brands she served to customers.

In quiet times, Angie liked to sit with a cup and think about what had gone on in years past. They didn't have long to wait before she emerged with a tray and three coffees. The friends sat at table and Angie started to tell her story. "Do you remember George? My friendly ghost, he returned here a few days ago." Angie paused to wait for the reply.

Helmut nodded and said, "Yes, I recall the chill he gave me."

Jannine's reply was much the same. Both had sensed the loneliness and sorrow George's ghost had endured over the years.

Angie continued, "Years ago, he and I had been a couple. Many of the locals thought we would marry and settle in the area."

"What happened?" asked Jannine.

The tears began to form as Angie recalled the sad day, many years ago. "He took his boat out one day. The day was calm with hardly a breeze to stir the

waves. Out of nowhere came a freak storm and for hours the seas churned. From the top of the hills I stood and watched him struggle to keep the boat afloat and try to return. Each time he tried, the wind and tides pushed him further out. Until exhausted and wracked with pain; he had nothing left to give and the waves smashed his boat. I never set eyes on him after that and assumed he had drowned.”

Jannine got out of her seat and went to cuddle her friend as she sobbed gently, “That is such a sad story. We are sorry you felt you wanted to tell it. The memories are obviously vivid and very painful for you.”

Angie wiped the tears away, as her make up smeared and continued, “I mourned George’s loss for months. I hardly went out and couldn’t bear to see the sea for a long time. On a rare visit to town, I met the man who became my husband. At first things between us were good. One day I began to notice strange things happening around the house. He would disappear for hours in his room. He did not say a word about what he did in his room, when he came out.”

Helmut blinked and took a sip of the steaming coffee. His mind concentrated on the caves and what might be inside their dark and dank recesses. Could a man live in there for years?

Jannine had become more interested in Angie’s love story than the inherent dangers of the next few days. She gazed listlessly out of the window. Her mind wandered and she wondered about the tragic love life of her close friend. “Do you wish you had waited for news of George? Before moving forward with the man you ended up marrying.”

Angie wiped a tear from her eye. Jannine sensed years of pain behind the face of her friend as she replied. “I didn’t need official confirmation. When the ship went down I had a cold, dark dread in my soul. The sensation was the same as if something had enveloped my being in the depths of a dungeon.”

The ladies hugged each other as Jannine realised she had seen a new and vulnerable side to her friend. A side which Angie had kept hidden from the regulars since the day she took control of *The Pot*.

Helmut broke from his thoughts for a moment to join the conversation. “Did you suspect your husband was doing something wrong?”

Angie gave a hearty laugh and replied. “Honey, there ain’t a lot gets passed the seventh daughter of a seventh daughter. He might have tried to hide what

he was trying to do. I had my suspicions a long time before the storm ruined the house. He heard rumours of gold deposits in the caves and tried to use a powerful elemental to locate them.”

Jannine gasped as she said, “Gold, here!”

Angie held her hand firmly and replied. “A tiny vein runs through the old cave but like sea coal. The amount isn’t worth the time and money to dig out. He thought he might locate the vein and dig it up. What he didn’t realise is the vein is held in check by the sea witches. Tampering with the balance of natural elements led to their wrath.”

Helmut smiled and said, “Are you are the sea witch, Angie?”

She winked and said, “One of several in the area, Helmut. Each coastal village has its own witch and once a year we meet.”

Jannine smiled and said with sly grin and a wink. “So, that’s why you always take the same week off and go to Marton-by-the-Shore. I had my suspicions that you had a reason for taking the same week each year.”

Angie gave a wink and licked her lips, “Yes, our origins go back centuries. To times when Marton was on the shore, not the marshy inland as it is now.”

Helmut moved in his hard seat and asked, “Were you responsible for the storm which wrecked the house?”

Angie shook her golden tassled locks and replied, “No. He summoned an entity to try and find the vein. He didn’t realise its powers and he unleashed something far more powerful than he had ability to control. If we hadn’t intervened the whole of the area from the point to the hill top may have been blown apart.”

The look of horror on Jannine’s face needed no words. She had never imagined an entity could do such terrible things on such a large scale. Her hands began shaking as she finished her coffee and gently put the cup down. Try as she might to not draw attention to her shaking. Her attempt to hide her fears failed and she dropped the cup. “I’m sorry, Angie. The news shook me more than I imagined.” She stuttered as she bent to pick the broken cup off the floor.

Angie got up from her chair and walked around the bar. She glanced back and said, “Don’t worry about the cup. Before you ask me, the entity is contained. For as long as the vein is left in tact. Even a slight gap and all hell will be let loose-no exaggeration.”

By now concerns began to show on Helmut's face. The handsome, craggy face took on a pallid shade. The news gave him the appearance of a man who had returned from the dead.

After a minute or two Angie came from the kitchen and started to mop the floor around the table. As if nothing had happened. "I'd better close shop and let you two lovebirds get back to the hut for now. I hope you'll pop in again before you think about going down to the cave." She said as they approached the door to leave. Something in her voice had changed and he glanced back to see Angie looking very worried. She knew something and needed to tell him.

Not a word passed between them but Helmut sensed the concern in Angie's voice. So, he gave an unseen nod of agreement. They walked out of the door and into the strong wind coming off the sea. The wind became so strong it took his breath and pushed against the door. He realised something elemental was challenging his mettle already.

The wind grew in strength, until Jannine could hardly hold his hand. She turned to talk to him and noticed his cheeks pulled back in agonised pressure. He was struggling to breathe as the wind whipped his face. Over the roar of the wind she yelled, "I've never seen a wind this strong in all my days, love!"

Then, as if a fan had been switched off. The air became still. They gazed out to sea and Helmut blinked and rubbed his cheeks then said. "Do you think it was the wind? What do you make of that?"

Not understanding his meaning. Jannine followed his finger. "That can't be right!"

He held her close and said, "Now, do you realise what I meant about the wind. Up here it's so hard we can hardly stand and yet down on the beach, not a wave ripples."

The scared look on her face told more than she was willing to tell him. Jannine asked Helmut, "Are you going down to the caves?"

He took her soft hands in his gnarled and rough fingers. After a few seconds he caressed them so gently she didn't register the touch. Something stirred in her heart as she realised her lover might not be able to beat this challenge. Helmut gazed into her sad young eyes and paused before he said. "I think I need to go, if only to give myself peace of mind."

She sensed the pause hid a dangerous secret. Yet she was unsure what to ask. Or if she should ask anything—*“Is there anything to be said?”* she wondered, *“or are we going over old ground?”*

The usual calm which Helmut enthused for his idea had vanished. In its place, Jannine began to sense not intrigue and wonder but fear of the unknown. Something Angie said or hinted had spooked Helmut. Now he showed a lot less enthusiasm and resolve. As if he was being pulled to the caves rather than going by choice.

Silently they walked down the path to their hut. Only occasionally he would glance out to sea or at the bushes. Each time, she noticed a far away look in his eyes when his gaze caught hers. On arrival at the door they halted while Helmut searched for his keys. When he found them—after twice dropping them back in his overcoat pocket—he tried to open the door. His once firm, yet gentle hands shook so much. Jannine took the keys from him and opened the door for them.

Walking across the room to the stove, Jannine said, “You have a sit down. I sense something Angie said has spooked you. You need to calm yourself. I’ll put the coffee on and make some sandwiches for our meal.” She moved around the room, keeping an eye on the kettle; she turned to the bed and saw Helmut had fallen asleep. *“Poor devil,”* she thought as she continued to make the coffee. *“Whatever it is she said has worried him so much, he has fallen asleep.”*

Jannine made herself a cup of coffee and a sandwich. Then she went over to the bed to sit with her lover. He appeared to be sleeping calmly. With a jolt he shot upright and screamed, “Not again!” Then fell back on the bed in a dead sleep.

The shock of the movement and the volume of the shout disturbed Jannine. She spilled her coffee and dropped her sandwich on the floor. She bent to pick the food up as Helmut woke and rolled onto his side. He glanced at her worried face and said, “I did it again, didn’t I.”

She finished picking her food off the floor and put her plate on the edge of the bed. Then she replied, “Yes. You shot upright and yelled *not again*. After that you fell asleep for a few minutes.”

He sat up in the bed. His naked body sweating after the bad dream and his hair fluffed out. The same way a bird trying to keep the cold winter out of its body does. “I’m sorry. The bad dreams keep haunting me.”

She held his hot body close and said, "Was this about the Katerina again?"

He blinked and thought before replying, "No. I recalled a vague memory of being washed overboard. There is nobody on the boat and I can sense the sea flowing around me in a swirl."

Her mind began to race as she recalled her horror at the news of losing Ian. "Do you think this is about Ian's disappearance?"

He ran his hands through his ragged mane of hair and replied, "I don't think so. The memory is vague. The distance in time is too great and the images are fading. The images were as though somebody reached out to me."

Tears welled in her eyes and her vision blurred as memories of day of her loss came flooding back. The folks walked around, looking but avoiding eye contact. Everybody wanted to say something but had no idea what to say, until she met Angie. Angie always appeared to say the right thing in any situation. Her knack of finding the right words for the moment was uncanny. It was almost as if she had the ability to read your mind-maybe she did.

For some reason people went to Angie for counsel, especially in moments of personal crisis. She exuded confidence as much as kindness of spirit. Yet nobody understood her and nobody recalled her coming to the bay area. Angie appeared to have been in the bay for all time, but surely that wasn't true. People often thought Angie had the ability to calm any storm in your soul and often she could. Nobody knew her secret or much about her past.

Jannine shook her head to clear her mind and asked Helmut, "Where do you think the memories are pointing?"

He held her tight as his sweaty body calmed from the shakes. The he replied, "I have no idea where or when they came from. All I remember is the memories were vivid and scared me."

Jannine ran her hands through his wet and matted hair as the tears filled her eyes, "Oh, my poor, sweet man. I wish I could help you. All I can do is to be here for you to talk to, if you want."

Helmut's strung and muscular body shook as she clung to him. Her man was shaking like a scared child and she wouldn't let go. Jannine's deep maternal love for a man she didn't know existed a few months ago had grown so strong. She realised she needed to be here for him, though he might refuse to admit the need.

Having his shaking body close; aroused deep sexual sensations in Jannine. This was not because she felt he had exposed a weakness she might exploit. He had let her in to a new area of his life. An area he had previously locked her out off. For fear of her getting harmed by knowledge she may not be able to understand.

He leant back in her soft arms and as the tears started to well, he said. "What I witnessed was an unbelievable dark presence. A shapeless form which devoured all light and its tendrils reached up the water's edge to drag me down. The further I went, the colder my soul became until even my breath froze in my chest."

Jannine wept as she said, "I'm so sorry, love. I wish there was some way I was able to ease your pains. The only thing I can do. Is let you know I love you and will be here whenever you need comforting."

He looked at her and replied, "Can I be open and totally honest?"

She gave a half smile and a stifled laugh as she replied, "Always."

Helmut sat up and got off the bed. And he started pacing the shed, "There is no easy way to say this."

Jannine held his gaze and said, "I think I have an idea what you are going to say. Go ahead and say it."

He kept a silent pace up. He crossed and re-crossed his arms over his chest as he thought how to say what was on his mind. "Okay, here is my problem. I'm scared to go ahead with the plan, and not only because of the dream."

She rose from the bed and went to the window to view the raging seas. She watched as the birds fought the strong winds. Before she turned to him, she put the kettle on the boil for a new pot of coffee. "I had a feeling that was coming, love." She replied, as she turned and faced her lover.

He went to the sink and turned the taps on to run the cold water. He washed his tear-stained face, "How long have you thought there may be a problem?"

The smile disappeared from her face as Jannine replied, "Since our chat with Angie. You tried to hide some knowledge from me. As soon as she said she wanted to talk to you before you entered the cave. I sensed a change in your grip – the difference was only slight—but I sensed the change."

The couple started to hug for comfort. The kettle whistled and Jannine returned to brew the coffee. A few minutes later she handed him a cup and took a

seat on the bed next to him. Silence ensued as neither of them had an idea what to say or what direction to go. The endless afternoon silence was broken by a dark figure banging on the window.

The startled couple looked to the window to find out who was outside. A figure was yelling something in the wind. Their vision remained blurred until Jannine wiped the condensation off and saw a welcome face looking back at her. She put her cup down on the sink and ran to open the door, "Angie!" she called out. "What a pleasant surprise to meet you down here. Come in and sit down. Why didn't you wait for us to come to *The Pot*?"

Angie stepped through the doorway. Her coat soaked through and her hair windblown and bedraggled but her radiance shone through the dampness. Through her usual beauty ran the face of concern for the afternoon. "As you remember, I asked Helmut to come and talk to me before he went ahead with the plan." She said and paused.

Helmut nodded and said, "I remember. We were on our way and we would have been up by now but ..." Before he could finish, Angie ended the sentence.

With a look of concern on her face, she said, "You had a bad dream and are reconsidering your idea."

He blinked and said, "How did you know? The dream only happened a few minutes ago."

Angie glanced towards the cupboards and noticed an unused cup on a shelf bearing the sign of the Green Man. "Do you mind if an old lady makes a cup of coffee to warm her bones as she tells you her story?"

Jannine blinked and said, "I'm sorry for being discourteous. Please sit down and get out of your wet clothes. I'll put a fresh brew on for us."

Angie started to take her wet outer garments off. Then she rubbed her hands to get some blood flowing, after being out in the driving rain for so long. She put her coat on the only radiator working in the hut. The coat dried slowly and the steam rose in misty swirls up the windows. "Don't fret. The shock of seeing me here surprised you. I did plan to wait for your return but thought I'd better tell you sooner than later."

Jannine filled the cups with the coffee and walked across to where Angie sat, "Tell us what?" Helmut glanced across to Angie and Jannine realised they had knowledge of something she didn't. "Okay, guys, who's going to let me in on your secret?"

Angie glanced at Helmut and shrugged her shoulders and he glanced back and nodded to her. "You'd better sit down. This is a long story," Angie started. "Helmut knows half of the story but is beginning to fit the pieces together. He still can't believe what he is finding out."

He looked at Angie and nodded, "I heard stories and thought that is all they were. Children's folk stories, told to amuse children at night time. I began to realise..." he paused. He wondered if Angie would take over, or if Jannine would ask some questions.

There followed a silent pause as neither lady appeared to know what to do. Jannine broke the silence with some question "What stories? And how does this connect to Angie and you?"

Angie wiped the last of the rain from her face and stood up. She moved to the window and said, "Helmut means the story of the '*Sisters of the Sea*.' We have been given orders to protect the shores. From the presence of evil sea spirits coming on land and creating havoc. My sisters and I have been guarding these shores for as long as we can remember."

Jannine had to put her coffee down. This news proved too much. "Are you telling me you're a sea witch and centuries old, Angie? I like a joke but this is ridiculous!"

Angie moved over to Jannine and held her friend in her arms, then looking her in the face, Angie said. "Is it? You can ask anybody in *The Pot*. Nobody can give you a date when I arrived. That is because I have been here for so long I became part of the area."

Still unsure if this was true or some private joke at her expense, she asked Helmut, "How much of this do you believe?"

Helmut paused for a second to glance out of the window at the raging storm and replied, "Everything Angie said is true. At first I didn't believe it, or maybe didn't want to believe the story. Then things began to fall in place." He paused again while they let Jannine absorb what she had found out about her long time friend.

Jannine remained dumb-founded and bewildered but began to believe her friends. Neither Angie nor Helmut showed signs of a grin. Both of their faces showed a dead calm. This happens when you are telling a truth to enlighten somebody who isn't certain.

Helmut continued. His style had changed as he realised he needed to do two things. He needed to gain information from Angie. At the same time continue the talk in a way as to let Jannine catch up on what had been happening. "I read folk tales about seven sisters who guarded the North shores and kept the sea spirit calm, Angie. That is all I thought they were, stories for children."

Angie picked up on the change in style and realised she too had to inform Jannine of what had been going on. As well as replying to Helmut's questions. "Remember, most folk tales contain facts in them, Helmut. Age tends to add a little extra for enjoyment. The story probably started out with somebody relating something they saw and couldn't understand. The stories of the seven sisters are as old as time. We had been able to keep the sea spirit in check until now. He grows more powerful each day and our strength grows weaker each contest with him."

Jannine sensed she had a part of the story. Yet, she began to realise, a larger part was missing. "Angie, you said you and your sisters are spirits who protect the land from the sea spirit. Are you sea spirits too?"

Angie turned to face the friends and replied. "No, we're Earthen spirits and are tasked with keeping the sea calm. We get our powers from the lands we protect. Our strongest link is when we protect a large land mass, however..." Angie paused to gaze into the storm laden skies.

Angie tried to continue but Jannine cut in. "You're at your weakest when the land is only a few islands."

Helmut realised Jannine was beginning to understand the dilemma and replied. "That is correct. Until a few years ago the sisters were able to contain him, but ..."

Before he could finish, Angie ended his sentence, "One of my sisters on the North shore got killed by a sudden storm. The storm came from nowhere and vanished as quickly. She never had a chance to protect herself and got torn apart. All of the sisters felt the shock of our loss. We realised the sea spirit had been gaining strength for a major attack coming from the Cooper Island range. This area is out of our control. The islands are so tiny and far apart our magic is no match for his. Without our sister, we have little chance of containing him."

Some things began falling into place for Jannine. Yet, many pieces appeared to be missing. "Does this have anything to do with the death of your late husband, Angie?"

Angie was standing looking out of the window, "A lot but that is for later. We have more important matters to worry about and besides. What is done is done and can't be undone."

Sensing Angie hid more than she said, Jannine pushed her friend. "What did happen the night of the storm? Nobody found out and you never said what happened at the house."

Angie was getting more than a little cross that Jannine kept pushing this area of questioning. And almost spat her reply back, "Okay, you want to know the facts. I'll tell you once this is over. For now we need to think of the storm heading this way."

Jannine realising she had gone too far; bowed her head and said, "I'm sorry. I didn't mean anything, Angie."

Angie's had calmed after reaching flash point and her gentle voice replied. "That's Okay. Old Angie didn't think you did but we have more important things to fight now than my past. This is no ordinary sea storm and this area will get the most violent winds. We are not only exposed on many sides but the first land the storm hits."

Helmut walked the floor for a while trying to think of what to do. Not wanting to look out of his window at the storm front heading along the coast. "How long do estimate before the storm arrives?" Helmut asked as he gazed at the dark and threatening storm clouds overhead.

Before she could answer, the hut was shaken twice by violent winds; windows rattled and the door flew open as the pressure inside grew. Then the storm appeared to subside as quickly as it had arrived. Angie, Jannine and Helmut found themselves in a heap on the floor as the storm passed over. Thoughts came to mind this had been a warning shot not the start of the storm.

Angie raised her head and commented, "Judging by the violence we witnessed and the pressure build up. I wouldn't say more than two or three hours at the utmost, if you planned on doing something. Now is the time. You get your things ready and I'll go back to *'The Pot'* and call the men to help us. God help us for what is coming our way"

Helmut crossed himself and said, "Amen to that—if he can't—nobody can."

The raging storm outside slammed wood from the beach against the small hut and made the glass in the windows rattle. To the extent small cracks and fis-

tures began to show. In the violence of the winds and rain Jannine's voice was all but lost as she yelled. "I don't understand what you meant about spirits but this is no ordinary storm look at the sea!"

Helmut and Angie took a glance at what Jannine was talking about. The waves had risen to the size of a four storey house and were taking the shapes of various demonic forms. "You'd better get a move on. I'll call the men from the village. We'll meet you at the path to the cave – be careful – he'll see we're coming," Angie called against the howling wind.

Helmut nodded and tried to open the door for Angie to get out. With help from Jannine he was able to open the door for Angie to squeeze through. The lovers took a minute to sit and cuddle. Jannine ran her fingers through his matted hair and cried on his shoulder. "You can't go out there in all this. You'll die and I can't bear to lose you, Helmut."

He held her young body close and felt her firm breasts pushing against the thin material of her shirt. His thoughts were with her as he ran a hand across her nipple. "I have little choice in the matter. If I don't go, in about an hour there won't be a lot left of the area from here to '*The Pot.*' I can think of many better things to do, but this needs to be done and soon."

With a final loving touch, Jannine ran her hands across his thighs and said, "Okay, I don't like the idea. I wish you didn't need to do go out in the storm but there is more at stake than my love for you. All I ask is that you remember you are working with a damaged shoulder."

He felt a twinge of guilt—or was it his shoulder reminding him—as he rubbed his shoulder and said. "I know the shoulder is damaged and I realise the limitations this imposes on my mobility. But the task ahead needs to be done."

Helmut gave the door a hefty push to start it opening before Jannine came to help him. The wind against the door was so strong it took both of them pushing for minutes to get the door slightly open. He glanced up the path and saw a tiny figure head down against the storm. "Keep going, Angie, we need you and your sisters more than ever now," he muttered into the storm.

He took the first steps against the wind but got thrown back against the hut. So hard he remained breathless for a few minutes. Unbowed he started again. With the rain lashing into his face – and visibility down to inches – he strove forward. Not sure if he would be able to complete the task but certain he would die trying.

He walked head bowed up to the cut off for the path. Once he found the lane he hid behind the hedge to remain in cover as the storm lashed the area. "I hope you get the men, Angie," he whispered, "I can't do the job without them."

Back at *The Pot*, Angie pushed her way across the open space used for the car park and made for the doors. She tried to open the doors as a gust of wind pushed her so hard she fell against the side of the inn. She lay curled up and winded for several minutes. She picked herself off the floor, she yelled, "If that's all ya got, ya ain't got much!"

She knew bravado meant little now. The storm had started and much worse was to come. For now she needed a personal booster and calling names was a good start. With great effort she got the doors open and went inside. The winds had broken the windows and tables and glasses were strewn across the floor. "*Blimey, this'll take some clearing*," she thought. Time was running out and things needed to be done. She dashed to the phone and dialled Toby.

Toby's phone rang for a minute or two before he answered, "Toby here. How can I help?"

He didn't need to ask what was wrong. The anguish in Angie's voice told him more than any words she may say, when she replied. "Toby, this is Angie, get the men together and meet me at the path. We'll start work as soon as you arrive."

Toby didn't need to be told what to do. The friends at *The Pot* had talked their plans out many times. Each time they planned this moment, they prayed they wouldn't need the plan. They hoped was this time would not come, but the time for action had arrived. The plan had been talked about out of earshot of Jannine. In order not to scare her; as Angie sensed raw power within her young friend. A power she realised they would be required to call on. The less Jannine understood about her power, the more use it would be. As a raw power, Angie realised it had to be sent from deep within Jannine's soul and not be guided.

Toby made the phone calls. Angie dashed up to her room to gather a few things for the approaching conflict. She opened her bedroom door and walked to her wardrobe. From the bottom she pulled out an old wooden chest. The lid had been carved with sea serpents and signs of the Olde Magic which she and her sisters practised. Angie picked a glass rod out of the chest and holding it to her ample bosom she called. "Earthen Sisters, we at Bartleby Bay require your

help to get through this day. We have a child of the new age who does not yet realise her powers. Please grant us the energy to show her the way.”

The rod in Angie’s hands started to vibrate. The rod glowed amber then red and finally with a light blue glow. The spirits of her Earthen Sisters entered the room from all directions and swirled around to form the shape of a Cormorant. The bird’s long neck stretched out to Angie as she patted her guide on the head. A sign the sisters were together again for one more battle. She didn’t need to show the bird the way. She opened the windows on the back of the inn. The storm was so violent; things were being thrown all over. She looked to the skies and saw the bird rise into the darkened clouds above the cliffs. Then she closed the window, walked to her door. On leaving the room she crossed herself and said, “I hope we shall meet again sisters. In better circumstances next time hopefully.”

Angie walked down the stairs and out into the car park. Ahead of her she watched as the lonely figure of Helmut tried to walk up the path to the cut off for the old house. Every step he took forward, the wind held him back for two steps. Until out of breath and desperate he grabbed the first branches of the bushes hiding the path. From here he started to haul himself along the path using the branches as supports.

It wasn’t long before Toby and the men arrived. They carried heavy ropes and a block and tackle fit to haul a tug boat out of the mud. Angie had forewarned them of the heavy task ahead. They were fishermen and had got used to the pull of the waves. God-fearing folk believed in the power of sea spirits too.

Against the winds and angry spirits the men pushed forward. Ahead of them two lonely figures met. The figures hid behind the shelter of some branches as Angie & Helmut stopped to catch a breath. Angie glanced at the tired figure beside her and said. “Are you sure you need to do the job? I could ask Pete or Dave.”

He brushed the hair back from his rugged face and replied, “Thank you for the offer. I lost many friends in the disaster and this is my way of giving something back to them, Angie.”

They sat talking about the plans and what needed to be done and why it had to be him. Their discussion was disturbed by a voice called over the squalls, “Hey! Is anyone at home?”

Helmut lifted his head against the wind. Through a mist of rain he saw Pete and Toby hauling the block and tackle into the path. "Hi, Pete, we're ready for you." He called out.

The two men sat down beside Angie, and Toby asked, "How are we planning this? We talked a lot about what might happen. We hoped for clear weather not a raging storm and driving cold rain."

With a glance down the path and pointing in the direction of two strong trees, Helmut said. "Can you rig the block and tackle between those trees at the edge of the path, Pete?"

Pete glanced at the gap and replied, "Can Angie make a good stew?"

The group gave a laugh to hide their concerns over his safety. Then Toby and Pete set to work rigging the block and tackle. So, the weight if Helmut slipped would be taken by the ropes forming a lock on the block. This action would leave the men to pull him up and not worry about losing their grip.

Toby and Pete worked feverishly against the cold rain and the spirit of the sea. The spirit kept throwing rocks and branches at them. Helmut tied the rope around his waist and over his shoulder before he said to Angie. "Can you give the rope a good pull to make certain the knots will hold?"

Angie sat up and did as she had been asked, noticing the pain on Helmut's face. When he grimaced in agony as the rope cut into his bad shoulder. "Are you sure your shoulder can hold up if you slip?"

He looked back at his friend and called into the growling wind, "I don't think it can, but I have no choice."

The winds grew in strength and breathing became harder as Pete called out. "We're ready when you are, Helmut, but I wouldn't do it."

Helmut wrapped the rope firmly around his injured shoulder and patted his friend on the back. Then he stumbled forward in the wind. "Forgive a mad Dutchman, Pete, but I need to do this for my friends."

He crawled forward inch by inch. The low profile helped a little but the wind had changed and swirled up the rock face. He was lifted high one second and then dropping him on the ground, taking his strength away. Slowly, Helmut made his way to the edge and stopped to view the slippery rocks below. He paused to cross himself before he stood up and started to lower himself over the edge. He felt the pull on his shoulder as the rope held tight with the strength of the men taking his weight.

The wind forced his body into the rocks. The rocks cut his hands and face. And the dripping blood made him lose his grip as he kept slipping on the rocks. Each time he slipped, the pain shot through his injured shoulder and made the descent harder. Each jolt from below caused the men to slip closer to the edge of the face. They tried to dig their feet into the ground to hold Helmut, but Toby recognised the signs they were fighting a losing battle. One heavy jolt caused a panic for the men. Helmut slipped and they heard him call out in agony as the weight was taken fully on his shoulder. This time he didn't climb back to the rock face.

Toby realised what had happened and yelled out. "Angie! We're losing him. He's a dead weight and we are so close to the edge, we can't get traction to pull him up."

Angie realised the danger and called to the men. "Do what you can to take the strain, but if you can't help him don't put yourselves at risk!"

Toby had no time to reply before something strange happened. The rope went slack and the men fell back with the release of the weight. Pete glanced behind and yelled to Angie, "Angie. Look out for the block!"

Angie turned to see the massive chunk of wood and iron fly towards her. In an instant she held her hand up and the heavy item fell to the ground. "Thanks for the warning, Pete. What happened?"

Pete glanced at her and said, "A good thing you're a witch, or that might have been fatal."

Toby got off the muddy floor and started to explain. "We started easing him down and he slipped. We didn't have time to react before the rope snapped. The release of tension sent the block flying. I guess his body swinging on the end frayed the rope and he fell to the rocks."

Dave picked the rope up from the floor and said. "I would agree with you, Toby, but..."

Everybody turned to Dave and said, "What's wrong, Dave?"

Dave held the end of the rope up for everybody to view. "The rope didn't fray. The edges are clean. This means somebody else was on the beach."

Pete said something which caused some concern. "I did feel a slight release in tension. A few seconds before the rope split."

Angie realised what this could mean and asked. "Do you think Ian is in the caves?"

Dave wiped the sweat and rain off his face and replied. "Your guess is as good as mine. All I can tell you is the rope has been cut."

Angie took a quick glance at the hut and remembered Jannine was weathering the storm alone. What she witnessed next shook her. The door opened and her Jannine walked out into the storm at its strongest force. Angie had suspected for a long time, Jannine to be the link her sisters needed to fight the spirit. She never imagined her young friend would realise her destiny so soon.

Jannine appeared to be sleep-walking but Angie was too far away to be certain. All she saw was Jannine walking around the hut and making her way to the headland. Once she passed behind the hut Angie lost sight of her. Above the roar of the wind Angie heard a cry and noticed the appearance of the Cormorant in the sky.

On the headland, Jannine called into the skies. "Earthen Sisters, I am in your charge, guide my spirit as you wish to fight this evil. Together we shall defeat these demons of the sea." When she finished the Cormorant flew down and landed at her feet. Jannine's black eyes took on an eerie darkness as the spirits of the sisters entered her mind and she summoned her new energies. "I am one with you, my new sisters. Where once there were six with weakening powers now we are seven again. We have new energy flowing through our kindred."

Jannine's taught young breasts showed through the thin material of her shirt which had become drenched in the storm. Jannine strode to the end of the headland as the seas started to bubble and foam.

The waves formed in the shapes of demons and serpents. These shapes attacked Jannine for over an hour. She stood alone and exposed to the elements, arms spread wide as the bird circled above. The bird flew into the shapes of the wind to cause a distraction. In the middle of the harshest storm, the bird spread its wings. The sisters flew into the winds and the green colouring of the plumage split into a myriad of colours.

At this stage of the struggle the sisters started their final assault. On the shoreline below, Jannine called out. "Sea spirits, we Earthen Sisters are as one, desist your struggle as we gain renewed strength of spirit and we again beat you."

The waves calmed and all that remained was a drizzle from the rain. Tired and worn out, she turned back and walked to the hut. When she got to the hut

she opened the door and walked over to the bed in a daze. After a few minutes she collapsed on the bed in a dead sleep.

Toby and Angie discussed the situation and how best to explain what had happened to Jannine. How were they going to tell her that her lover had died? After losing Ian this might cause untold emotional damage, finally, Angie said, "I'll tell her."

Unaware of what happened, Jannine woke with a start. The hut was quiet, deathly quiet and the silence appeared to be outside as well. To her it appeared as if the world had ended. Jannine rose from the bed and dried herself, "*Why am I so wet?*" she thought. She had no answer to her question. After drying herself and putting on some clean clothes. She opened the door and glanced up the path. She watched as Angie and the men started taking the ropes back to *The Pot*. From this distance she began to sense something hadn't gone to plan. Angie walked head bowed and arm in arm with Pete. Unusually for Angie her verve for life had been drained, but why?

Jannine shivered as a chill it and thought, "*It must be because I am wet and tired.*" She closed the door and put a kettle on for a coffee, instinctively getting two cups down from the shelf. Then a thought hit her, "*Where's Helmut?*"

The kettle boiled and she poured herself a coffee, still concerned about Helmut. She began to grow more concerned about him. This was unusual for him to be gone and not leave her a message. She had started to make a sandwich before going up to *The Pot*. When there was knock on the door.

Jannine walked over and opened the door, standing in the door was Angie, "Come in and have a coffee. I was going to make a sandwich and come and see you. Do you know where Helmut is?"

Angie took her friend by the hand and led her to the bed, "You had better sit down, Jannine. I have bad news for you."

The look on Angie's usually charmingly happy face told Jannine that sad news was coming. She sat in silence as Angie told the story of the evening and her actions at the headland. Jannine sat in silence for some time before Angie said. "I realise I can never replace Ian or Helmut, but if you need to talk you know where I am. I will always be here for you."

Jannine tried to raise a smile of thanks but all she could manage was a teary eye. She hugged her friend and said. "Thanks, Angie. You're an angel on Earth. I don't think he is dead though."

Angie was surprised at this news and asked, "What makes you think he is alive? Pete and the men heard him cry out as he slipped and banged his head on the rocks. I realise the rope had been cut before we got it up, but even so, he is probably lying in the caves."

Jannine remarked, "Angie, do you remember when you told me about losing George? And the deep void you had at the news of his death."

Angie nodded and said, "Yes, I still get the same sensation, even when he visits me."

Jannine rose from her chair and said, "I don't get that sensation about Helmut. I can sense grayness, as if he is trying to contact me."

Angie smiled and hugged her friend, "Remember, if you want me, I'm here for you. For now I'll leave you to your thoughts."

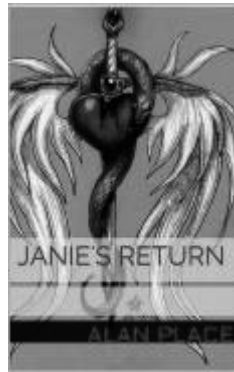
Angie got off the bed and started to walk to the door, but was halted when Jannine asked. "Did his body turn up? What happened to the rope?"

Angie turned to Jannine and said. "Helmut's body hasn't turned up and with the tides and rocks it is doubtful the body will surface. As for the rope - we don't know who cut him down."

Angie closed the door on her way out. Jannine laid back on the bed crying into her pillow, "Why me? Why now?"

A few weeks later Jannine was walking back to the hut when she thought she recognised a familiar figure. "Helmut, is that you?" she called to the stranger. The stranger ignored her. She got to the hut and opened the door. She stepped inside and smelled something familiar but distant. "*This can't be happening,*" she thought, "*this has to be a sensual lie. I want him back so much that my mind is playing tricks on me, now I smell his tobacco in our hut.*" The day had been cold and work at *The Pot* kept her busy. So she decided to have a relaxing shower before sitting down to read for the night. She stepped into the shower; through the mist of water she saw a dark figure watching her. "Hey! Creep, do you like what you see?" She called in anger, after a moment she recalled a face from her past. Dressing quickly she ran outside to watch a figure vanish off the headland.

Did Helmut return?
Remember his body was never found.
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Did you love *A Sailor's Love*? Then you should read *Did We See Him?*¹ by Alan Place and P A Canella!



This story is partially factual as the mystery of the disappearance of Lord Fawcett remains unsolved. My book uses one of the popular theories of the time -- and my favourite theory -- to try and explain the circumstances.

1. <https://books2read.com/u/bPRRdm>

2. <https://books2read.com/u/bPRRdm>



About the Author

I have wanted to be a writer since I learned to read. My reading ability was always at the top of the class and this developed into the talent for storytelling.

In 2011 an injury to my left leg left me disabled and I finally got the opportunity to try to write. The first stories I had published were in a US available only anthology.

The Ghost of St. Mary's and *The Rocking Lantern* were not only the first published, but the first I wrote. Later that year, I had *Old Church Ghosts* published on line in the UK. The original version is only available in the *Special Edition* version.

I made my on line reputation for ghost stories, but I also write for the children's charity books by **The Peacock Writers**.

In 2012, my book *Chronicles of Mark Johnson* won an award for excellence from the US on line magazine **indiePENdents.org**. Both this book, and its sequel *Wharfemere Finale* had rave reviews from New York reviewer, Fran Lewis.

In recent times, my US hit series *Forgestriker* has sold over 350 e-books in the seven books series, and earned me a reputation for writing sci-fi in the USA.

Read more at hereiamattheedge.blogspot.co.uk.

